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Walter
H. P.





(Walt

Letters

ON

THE WEST INDIES.

BY JAMES WALKER.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR REST FENNER,

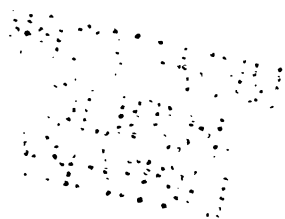
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1818.



S. Curtis, Camberwell Press.

TO
THE PLANTERS
OF
TOBAGO AND ANTIGUA,
ISLANDS DISTINGUISHED AMONG BRITISH COLONIES IN THE
OFFICIAL REPORTS LAID BEFORE PARLIAMENT,
THE ONE
BY ATTENTION TO THE CIVIL COMFORTS,
THE OTHER
BY ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
OF THEIR NEGRO POPULATION,
THESE PAGES
ARE INSCRIBED
WITH SINCERE WISHES, THAT EACH OF THE EXAMPLES,
IMPROVING STILL FURTHER IN ITSELF,
MAY SPREAD ITS BENEFIT OVER THE BRITISH WEST INDIES,
AND TO THE PLACE OF ITS ORIGIN PROVE THE SOURCE
OF SHOWING PROSPERITY.



INTRODUCTION.

THESE Letters, or rather Essays, were meant to be published anonymously, if published at all. An individual may have some acquaintance with a particular subject, and may, therefore, be willing to assume a common privilege, and deliver his sentiments upon it incognito ; when, at the same time, possessing no claim on the attention of the public, he would not have been equally ready to stand forward and address them in his own person : he may be confident in his cause and decided in his

views, while yet he feels that, if he had intended to appear openly as a pleader, he would have been very sparing of his appearance, under a consciousness that he may probably have before him some men whom it might better become him, on many points, to meet as instructors than auditors.

Peculiar circumstances in the present case added their weight to these feelings. A pamphlet attacking the Official Report, and the general proceedings of the Commissioners for the management of the late Crown Estates in Berbice, issued this year from the pen of Joseph Marryat, Esq. M. P. That a work on West Indian subjects should straightway be printed and avowed by the man who had lately come home from the direction of those properties, and yet should not be made the instrument of repelling that attack, must appear to amount to an admission, as far as his authority might be taken, that the commission was indefensible.

He cannot allow such an interpretation to be put on the silence which these Letters observe on this matter; and, therefore, having been persuaded by some friends, for whose opinion he feels much deference, to bring forward his name, he deems it necessary to make an observation or two in explanation of his conduct.

The manuscript was begun at the date prefixed to it; it was completed in plan, and nearly completed in detail, before Mr. Marryat's pamphlet appeared; and if it had not been written at a considerable distance from London (with little other view, at first, than relieving a season of indisposition), it might have been in print long before the writer heard of the publication in question. He has now seen the latter, and it has not occasioned any alteration in what he had prepared. Indeed he holds no authority to stand forward as the defender of those who were his superiors in office as

they are in eminence. Accordingly, the respectable gentlemen who have been singled out as the objects of illiberal attack, are strangers to the present publication :— it will come to their eyes, from the press, as new as to any reader who never heard of the Berbice Commission. The connexion indeed in which the writer has stood with those gentlemen, which originated in an act of confidence on their part, is continued, he is happy to think, in particular friendship. But they are quite competent to their own defence ; and they are men who will know how to appreciate his motives in imposing on himself this reserve towards them.

The truth is, the subject of West Indian amelioration has nothing to do with the personalities which have been attempted to be mixed with it. People at home, and moderate men in the colonies, therefore, must be desirous to see it stand entirely on its own merits. To this effect an humble

attempt is here made, and it is only to be wished that it had been undertaken by abler hands.

As to the particular topic which has introduced these observations, the writer would be doing injustice to himself and others if he did not shortly say, that he shall always reflect with satisfaction on the days he spent in Berbice in the exercise of the trust reposed in him by the Commissioners for Crown Property. No estates in the West Indies could promise better than the plantations in question promised in the beginning of 1816; no slaves ever were in more perfect subordination than the negroes belonging to those properties were at the moment of the agent's separation from them. When the interesting undertaking was suddenly put an end to by the treaty with the King of the Netherlands, it was retrieving its affairs with a rapidity exceeding the expectations (the moderate expect-

tations) entertained by him or by his intelligent assistant Mr. Scott.

Respecting even the preceding period, regarding which so much has been said, an answer of no small weight is to be found in the simple fact, that the whole duration of the commission from its commencement to its conclusion, including three successive agencies, was only four years—a very short time, as every thinking man knows, for an experiment in the agriculture of any country. Nor was the measure entered on as a fair experiment; the Report states this in strong and repeated terms. Indeed, were the writer to presume on offering any opinion, it would be, that hope was rather, perhaps, too little admitted into the attempt, and that this may possibly have operated in some respects against its success. But after all the evils that happened it, and notwithstanding its unfavourable pecuniary results, whatever these may have ultimately proved,

it is an humble, but deliberate opinion, which was produced by personal acquaintance with the properties, that if the undertaking had been continued, and if its management had gone on in the real spirit of the instructions of the Commissioners, as it was at last doing (all the merit the writer claims), it would not only have redeemed its debt, but have proved a source of revenue, and of *increasing* revenue ; this, indeed, not suddenly, but after a reasonable term of years. It is easy to say, as is done in the examination of the Report, that all ideas of this kind are speculative. No less easily, though not quite so concisely, could numerous facts be placed in a light exceedingly different from that in which they appear in that pamphlet. Some of these facts shall be thrown into a note,* namely, such of them as more or less concern the Writer's own administration ; the circum-

* For this note, see the end of the work.

stances of the present publication seem now to require this in justice to himself. Further, however, he shall not, and, indeed, cannot go ; he has neither materials, authority, nor inclination. Instead of taxing his readers with the protracted discussion of a matter now at an end, he would much rather urge every intelligent and liberal West India proprietor to listen to the suggestions which, after all that has been passing for a period now nearly ten times longer than the duration of the undertaking in question, must continually arise in his own mind, on the great points that concern his Negroes. If any thing thrown out in these sheets shall be of use in aiding such suggestions, the whole purpose of the author will be attained.

Truly solicitous for the good of the Colonies, and their harmony with the Mother Country, he writes not in a spirit of contention, but with the wish to advance, if

his feeble aid could do so, both those great interests. Although, therefore, he avows himself one who thinks that the evils which require a cure are deeply rooted, and cannot with honesty be treated as slight; although consequently some proprietors in the plantations may be ready to think his views strong, and a still greater number of inhabitants may feel his remarks to be somewhat free, he is not without confidence, that calm and moderate men among all classes, who go on with him to the end, will admit, that his genuine objects are the safety and prosperity of the British West Indies.

As it has been already hinted, that these Letters might with propriety have been called by any other name, it is hardly necessary to add, in express terms, that they never were actually transmitted to any individual. The epistolary form was felt convenient for treating the subjects easily,

and it kept up in the writer's mind a certain sort of interest connected with the imagination of addressing sometimes one, sometimes another, of his old West India friends.

47, Great Marlborough-Street,
Dec. 1817.

LETTERS
ON THE
WEST INDIES.

LETTER I.

ON THE INTERFERENCE OF THE BRITISH PUBLIC IN
COLONIAL AFFAIRS.

October, 1816.

THERE has been so much discussion of late on subjects relating to the colonies, that I can not resist taking up my pen to throw together a few thoughts which have suggested themselves to me in consequence of what has been said and written by the opposite parties. Seven and twenty years ago, on the other side of the Atlantic, I believe you and others reckoned me *one of the reformers*, but I am not aware that I have ever been deemed a dangerous innovator.

I regret that the animosity which has always more or less united itself with every contro-

versy on colonial subjects has in the present day increased to a very unhappy degree. On the West Indian side of the question, it kindled strongly on the first proposal of a registry bill; and it has increased in heat ever since. I particularly regret when I see gentlemen of respectability on that side renewing and keeping alive this irritation by every possible means, however extraneous, and even forgetting themselves so far as to descend to the publication of personal abuse.

The only property which in early life I succeeded to, was a patrimony in the West Indies; my feelings and wishes are strongly interested in the colonies; when I think of them, I always think of certain individual friends whom I highly esteem, and whose benefit I should earnestly wish to see secured and promoted. I cannot but lament therefore when I see substantial interests sacrificed, as I think, to temper, to prejudice, and to the momentary object of pushing an argument against an adversary. Let it be remembered, that whatever warmth the opponents of West Indians may betray in the contest, and whatever mistakes it may lead

them to commit, even if these were to end in the total ruin of their cause, the consequences do not affect them personally. This, you know, is a favourite argument urged against them :—

“These men have neither property nor families in the West Indies; whereas we their antagonists are involved both in fortune and life in the consequences of every reform and every change.”

The statement, I may remark, is generally intended to imply, that not so much as a hearing ought to be granted except to one side of the question: were it only meant to enforce the necessity of allowing the most ample hearing to the colonial side, nothing could be fairer or more incontrovertible. But there is another inference of which West India gentlemen would do well to attend to the importance. Since their all is at stake, let them exercise great wisdom; since they proclaim so strong a sentiment, let them act like men who believe what they say. Let nothing entice them, no not the powerful influence of a keen debate, to lose sight for a moment of such deep and momentous concerns, such all-important interests. ~~Whatever~~ their antagonists do, let *them* conti-

nually remember how entirely their part must be that of the wisest caution, the coolest conduct, the most deliberate forethought. One capital mistake perhaps may be fatal to them. They themselves cease not to tell the world that the possessions they are defending are constructed of the most inflammable materials, and that a single spark arriving, by either accident or design, from the hand of friend or foe, is enough to reduce the whole to ashes. Surely, in such circumstances, it is mere childishness to say, "I am exposed to a sharp fire, and therefore whatever be the consequence, I will make my enemy feel I can fire as sharply as he:"—the answer is, "You may one day return from a successful adventure of this sort, at once to enjoy your triumph and to contemplate your ruin." I confess I tremble when I see the imprudence which is manifested by some of the West Indian champions. Because they think a powerful mean of creating a popular interest in their favour will be to rouse an apprehension in this country of all the slaves in the colonies getting suddenly free, they do not hesitate to make this dangerous topic prominent in all their discus-

sions; not only imputing motives to the conduct, and interpretations to the language of their adversaries, such as the latter disclaim, but sometimes saying things which the most rash and ignorant advocate for emancipation would hardly, I should think, venture to utter. The editors of West Indian newspapers, often, in no less zeal and anger, copy the accusations, and these are read by the free black and coloured people of the colonies! Is this wise? Is an argument which is obtained at such hazard a desirable acquisition to a cause? It were even well if this feverish feeling were confined to the few individuals who give it vent before the public; but their wish to spread it generally has certainly had a lamentable degree of success among our brother colonists, many of whom indeed were too much pre-disposed to its reception. I hardly meet an old West Indian acquaintance who can talk with tolerable temper of the abolitionists. Surely this is not a spirit adapted to a grave occasion like the present, or an important question, such as that of a general registry of slaves.—It is utterly inconsistent with the wisdom and deliberation, with which

mankind have generally thought that matters of legislation ought to be treated; and it is not more unworthy of the subjects in debate, than it is of some of the respectable individuals who seem at present carried away by its impetus. Nor does it produce any solid conviction in the public mind. Indeed the result tends sooner or later to the opposite direction. It may be proved, from innumerable instances in the history of this country, that even when a triumph in a controversy is gained, if it has been accomplished by mere clamour, it is generally short-lived: the question, whatever it may be, is again brought under review, and the decision probably reversed, under circumstances of accumulated offence and mortification to the party first victorious. This leads me to what I humbly think the West India body have not duly considered in the present question, I think they have not yet made use of sufficient time nor sufficient coolness of mind to examine whether the views they have taken of their interest are likely to be *permanently* promoted, supposing every point *now* in dispute were *now* carried against the abolitionists.

The ground which it appears evident the West Indian leaders have taken and are determined to maintain if they can, is that the people of this country shall not be permitted to interfere in colonial affairs. Their language is, that it is necessary to resist being dictated to in the matter of registry, otherwise the interference will become extended to every matter, and ceaseless in all future time.

I do not mean to enter at all upon the particular question of the registry, but to face rather the wider and larger subject of interference in general, in the view in which colonists regard it as an object of apprehension. Registry, they say, is only a branch, it is not the tree; and we must have the tree cut down and rooted out.— I agree with their definition, but I confess I differ very much from them as to both the propriety and the probable success of their design.

I readily concede that *undue* interference is a possible thing, and would be a thing so wrong that there would be good reason, whenever it should occur, to remonstrate strongly against it.

What is, and what is not, undue interference, comes then to be a natural question; and I admit

that it is no wonder if West Indians are anxious to see it brought to a settlement. Indeed, I not only admit, but assert, that it is now become of the most momentous consequence to every man who possesses property in the plantations, that the mother country and the colonies shall come to some reasonable understanding on this matter.

Yet it is quite plain to me that the case does not admit of an exact line being drawn in theory. It is of importance that West Indians shall be convinced of this impossibility. What then is the understanding that may be arrived at? The only possible understanding in a case which must of necessity be a matter, not of theory but of practice, seems to be, that good sense, moderation, and feelings of attachment shall be the guides on both sides. One thing further, however, is very evident: any man who considers the relative situations of the two parties, will clearly perceive, that as the first step towards any amicable line being drawn at all, the colonies must not be too tenacious in their ideas, or too lofty in their language.

If the West India body wish to free them-

selves from the action of enquiry and discussion, and the control of public opinion, a disposition which, as I have already hinted, has been betrayed, and indeed avowed by some of their champions—the expectation is, in my humble opinion, utterly hopeless: and it is not the defeat of registry bills, the overturn of philanthropic institutions, nor the levelling of public and private characters with the dust,—were even all these things triumphantly accomplished,—which will attain the end proposed. I would ask any temperate and enlightened man whose travels and pursuits have not been confined to the West Indies, whether in the present state of the world, such an expectation can be rationally cherished by one single reflecting mind.—It is impossible. The interference of this country in colonial matters *will* continue. Opposition will only increase it, and it will extend, too, to all her foreign settlements equally. Accordingly, our brethren in the West ought to remember, that it does not limit its operations to their affairs. Our Eastern dominions have felt the stretch of its arm, and measures have been adopted with regard to India, contrary to

much Indian opinion, and powerful Indian remonstrance, *because the people of Britain would have it so.* The truth is, the mother country seems to have become struck with a review of her own conduct; and sensible that while she continued during more than two centuries planting colonies in all parts of the globe, she thought too little respecting the condition of the numberless subjects she thus adopted,—reflected too slightly on her duties towards them, and enquired too seldom into the proceedings of these of her sons who went to superintend them. This, you know, is a circumstance strongly urged against the abolitionists. “Britain,” it is said, “was the original actor in the British slave trade. Britain made slavery the law of her western colonies: and, in short, if it had not been for the British parliament, not a single colonial abuse could ever have got into existence.” The reproach cannot be averted; but can it be turned into an argument by our colonial brethren?—Yes, strange to say, some of them plead, that if the conduct of England was wrong, she has no title now to alter it; for this reason,—that she continued it so long.

What is the reply?—No; it is too much that her neglect lasted for a period which can only be looked back to with remorse and awe: it must now be atoned for; wisely and prudently no doubt, but with determination and perseverance. Posterity will judge of the comparative soundness of the two arguments. But meanwhile, I am thoroughly convinced that on the minds of the people of this country, the feeling I have just described has taken too firm and too general a hold to be ever eradicated. There has been awakened a spirit of investigation into colonial affairs, altogether unknown to our fathers. It will never be laid to sleep: to suppose that it will, is dotingly to foster an idea, contradicted not only by every probability, but by every thing that we actually see. It sometimes appears as if West Indian writers really flattered themselves, that the continuance of the system of interference depends on the lives of a few individuals. Let any man look at the state of the House of Commons, and the rising generation of public men, and say whether this is not a most delusive idea. Let him observe the diffusion of knowledge among the

lower orders in Britain; the ardour in promoting it evinced by those in middle life; and the action of that wonderful machine, new to the whole world, the Bible Society (is the mention of the name *Methodistical*?—a wise man will always look at a *fact*): and let him say if these are the days in which any one topic interesting to any of our species, and especially relating to numerous tribes peculiarly united to us, shall be locked up from discussion. He must pronounce the thought to be miserable infatuation. I rejoice to think so, and to feel confident that when the present race of opponents shall cease to exist on both sides of every contest, new parliaments and societies, new orators and writers, will make it known and felt in the farthest corners of the earth, that when the sons of Britain leave her shores, they do not leave her eye; and that while she will continue anxious to promote their pecuniary welfare, she will also now exercise over them every other duty of a parent. You will think my subject warms me. I own it does, and I appeal to you whether you do not feel warmed too. The glory and prosperity of our country have risen

with the exercise of her moral principles; nor can we surely wish them to rise otherwise. In that glory and prosperity all her colonies have shared, and none have taken a warmer interest in them than the colonies of the West. Nor do any of her subjects stand up more strongly for their birthrights as Britons than West Indians do; they cannot, therefore, refuse to pay the price of the noble and valuable possession. Their wisdom as well as duty is to acknowledge cheerfully the parental relation in which their country stands to them. I talk not of the power of the privy council at home, over governors and legislatures abroad: I enter not into the question of the authority of the laws of the imperial parliament over colonial laws: I speak of the control of the PUBLIC OPINION of this country;—the sovereignty of BRITISH FEELINGS AND BRITISH MODES OF THINKING over the feelings, ideas, and habits which are acquired by colonists. This control must be submitted to, if there is to be any health or soundness in our colonial system—any security in West India property—any cordial union between Britain and her foreign settlements. If it is

heartily submitted to, and the submission is honestly acted upon—if our brethren abroad really and practically manifest a desire to transplant British principles into their system, not of laws merely, but of habits and daily actions, and to foster the growth of those principles as much as their circumstances can possibly allow:—then the people of this country, who are a sensible people, will make all due allowance for a state of society so different from their own. They will fully admit their own disadvantage, not indeed in judging of great and general questions (for here the disadvantage, as we shall by and by see, lies on the opposite side), but in directing local details. If they see reasonable amelioration, they will not be impatient under its gradual advance. Peace, therefore, and security will prevail, and West Indian estates may descend to future generations even with a tranquillity hitherto unknown. But the hopes of the nation on this subject must not be felt troublesome, nor their continued watchfulness treated as impertinent. If the high language is persisted in, which, I deeply regret, I hear sometimes used against all in-

terference and all enquiry whatever; or if ameliorating laws and regulations are published to serve as a blind, or at least to become neglected and useless, rather than to be honestly enforced, surely it is not to be expected that such conduct will be submitted to. The contention will continue, till the black and coloured tribes, in whose hearing it goes on, will probably think themselves entitled, from being the subjects, to become the principal conductors of it: and then, alas, too certainly those fatal scenes must follow, the horrors of which have been often painted in such glowing colours by West Indians.

LETTER II.

ON THE CAPABILITY OF THE BRITISH PUBLIC TO JUDGE OF COLONIAL AFFAIRS.

If any of our old West Indian friends should see the lines I have written, I am prepared to expect in their faces, some rising symptoms of disapprobation. Perhaps, however, if they proceed far enough with me, their displeasure may, at times at least, diminish:—I cannot tell, for I sat down not to consider the sentiments of any man on either side, but to deliver my own. At present I must take a little further latitude, though at the risk of giving further offence.

I have stated, that in expecting success to the great and leading plan of resisting the investigation of the mother country into colonial

concerns, our brethren appear to me to be deceiving themselves with false hopes; that the delusion indeed is not only gross but so important that if persisted in it must end fatally. I have now to make some remarks on the reason which they assign for adopting such a plan; this reason is that the people of this country are not capable of forming a sound judgment on subjects which it is argued lie beyond their sphere. Here I think there is an equal mistake, and one which I think it is equally necessary for colonists to abandon.—I am aware that many of them will be even more unwilling to give up this point than the other. Having in my first letter, therefore, expressed my conviction that the mother country *will*, I have now to state my humble opinion that she *can* judge of colonial affairs.

I need hardly observe that I do not allude to those matters of detail which are purely of a local and physical nature. These have in fact little to do with our subject. Soil and climate, and their productions, differ in different countries, and no man in Britain pretends to offer an opinion on the proper mode or season for planting

sugar, cotton, or coffee. But there are things in which the laws of nature are universal, especially those matters, transcending all others in importance, which relate to the minds of human beings. It is in regard to the various *inhabitants* of distant climes that the people of this country think they can form some judgment. White men, black men, and coloured men, are subject in similar circumstances, whether of bondage or of freedom, to similar impulses, propensities, and aversions; similar hopes, fears, and wishes, in all parts of the world. To forget or reject this obvious principle, is an error fallen into by some persons who spend their lives on a West India plantation. They tell us that nobody but colonists can speak about colonies, as if a magic circle were drawn round those islands, detaching them from the rest of the globe. They consider the past history and universal experience of mankind, antient and modern, as of no use in judging of them, their neighbours, and dependants; as if all these were inhabitants of a different planet, of which the people of Europe can form no ideas.

Who are the men who thus think and speak? It is impossible not to ask the question, although the decision of the point in debate does not depend upon the answer. Various are the histories of individuals among them. We may trace one history not uncommon.

A youth, of perhaps the age of sixteen or seventeen, English, Scotch, or Irish, having rather bare prospects in his own country, and having heard of West Indians coming home rich, is seized with a desire of pushing his fortune in the colonies. He is fitted out by the industry of his parents, and leaves the parish where he was born and bred, for the nearest sea-port town, where he can take shipping for his destined plantation. Arriving there, he is appointed lowest white servant, and finds himself the subordinate master of slaves. This school would not perhaps be deemed the most favourable for the finishing of an unfinished education, except in the West Indies, and,—shall I give offence?—possibly Turkey or Morocco. However, our adventurer presently learns the ideas of other spirited young men, and soon makes up his mind on every subject

relating to the negroes. These being a dark-coloured, are of course an inferior race of human beings, if human beings at all, that is to say, if possessed of souls. All the progress in metaphysics necessary for a young ambitious planter being thus speedily attained, he has only to get over certain feelings of sympathy by which his yet unpractised heart attaches him, in spite of his new philosophy, to a common nature. The ridicule with which such childishness is treated around him, cures him in due time, aided perhaps by the hardships of his own lot. These possibly are very severe: indeed I have often most sincerely pitied the inferior classes of whites in the colonies, and earnestly wished for them, as perhaps some of them have often done for themselves, that they had never left their plough and their innocence at home. It is hard to say whether the situation is more unfavourable for improvement to the understanding or the heart. Books, alas, are a scarce article; time to read them is often more so. Is the most antient and interesting book in the world among the small number? Ah, the sacred volume, the gift

perhaps of an anxious mother, has since the expiration of the first six months been consigned to the back of the shelf;—it bears the marks of having been visited indeed afterwards, but only by the ants and cockroaches. The book of morality is possibly a second-hand Tom Jones—those of divinity a similar volume of Hume's Essays, and another odd one of Voltaire translated—both recommended by some kind friend a little older in colonial life, and farther advanced in the career of escape from the prejudices of the nursery. For amusement, there may have been picked up at a *vendue* a collection of songs, and some of the productions which disgraced our language during the earlier periods of the last century, under the name of English comedy. Is there a Sunday in the week? “It shines no Sabbath-day to him,” nor has he now even a wish that it should do so. The sacred stillness, interrupted only by the soothing and elevating sound of the church-going bell; all the associations which in earlier days accompanied the return of the hallowed morning have taken an unregretted leave of his mind. Of our young

man's conduct among the female slaves of the plantation, I wish to say nothing. Do I already colour my picture highly? I desire not to do so. Heaven knows that I have often sighed over my young countrymen sent forth raw and unfledged, exposed to much temptation, without experience, and without thought. Years pass on, and our hero, after ascending through various gradations, getting over several dangerous illnesses, and surviving many companions, attains perhaps to the reputation of a clever fellow and a good disciplinarian among negroes. Besides, he does apply himself to learn one thing for which he must be allowed due credit;—he learns the mechanical parts of plantership. These qualifications unite in recommending him to the management of some absent proprietor's estate. In this new situation, if he still continues to advance little in intellectual improvement, he at least does not fall back in ideas of his own consequence. If he does not study more than formerly the science of managing the rational creatures under him by the *rule of the mind*, he at least does not fail in using the influence he possesses over their

bodies. His practice is attended with this advantage, that exactly the same sort of influence answers with the cattle; and you know it is a sound maxim in carrying on any extensive work, that the less variety there is in the machinery employed, there is the less hazard of the superintendent's attention being unprofitably distracted. Accordingly, if you should venture now to broach such a subject with him as that of Christian instruction, and inquire whether he has ever heard that it has been found useful in the government of negroes, he has only to say, that whatever may be asserted on that point, he will never believe one word of it, and to ask you angrily if you mean to throw the colonies into rebellion. If on any occasion the word "feelings" should happen to drop from his lips, it is only to observe that these must not interfere with necessary discipline. As to the last maxim, even the distinguished *wife* sometimes knows to her cost that it is a rule without exception. Why not? Is not the impartiality most laudable? "If she deserves a good flogging, why should she not have one as well as any other negro wench on the

plantation? * Possibly the concern, a sugar estate, is one under the mortgage and charge of a mercantile house at home, whose anxiety is naturally rather to increase the present consignments than the future strength of the property; the salary is therefore regulated by the quantity of sugar made. Our manager makes a goodly number of hogsheads; he is well paid, and comes on to realize a little money. He at last ventures on the purchase of a property on his own account, chiefly on credit; and perhaps a year or two of those "good crops and good prices" which now and then occur as prizes in the West Indian

* The words of a manager of considerable estimation, to the captain of a ship once, in my presence. I shall not soon forget the indignant look of the British tar.

Manager is the appellation used in the Windward and Leeward Islands for the principal person on an estate, under the proprietor or his attorney; in Jamaica this person is called Overseer. His assistants are termed in the islands, overseers; in Jamaica, book-keepers. Names are perhaps of no great moment in any case, but the latter appellation seems not very appropriate. A Jamaica book-keeper has no books to keep, his business is to oversee the labours of the field, boiling-house, &c.

lottery, and the glitter of which seduces multitudes of by-standers to their ruin, may enable him to clear off all incumbrances. He goes on quite honest and fair in his dealings, perhaps even liberal and open-hearted to every man who has a white skin. His credit is now high at home, and he is able by command of money, in a country where the greater number of people round him are in difficulties, to add larger purchases to smaller, sometimes at one-half or one-fourth of the original cost. Finally, his importance in the colony, possibly introduces him to a seat in its legislature. Here it is to be hoped he is met by some men of more education and general intelligence than himself. This does not, however, lessen his ideas of his own "local knowledge." When convenient he takes his passage to Europe, and brings with him to the metropolis of his native country, now for the first time visited, the experience of forty years acquired in an island in the Atlantic, whose exact circumference I shall not pretend to determine, but where he has certainly seen, during that period,

some hundreds of white faces and some thousands of black ones.

Let people take care now how they presume in the presence of this enlightened personage to make mention of the term colony. Inhabitants of places on this side the water are ignorant: a person may have travelled through all Europe and part of Asia, he may even have carried his researches into Africa, but his course having been begun eastward instead of westward, all that he has seen and learned among mankind amounts to nothing; and in a particular manner he must be on his guard how he speaks about the last mentioned quarter of the globe before a man whose knowledge of the African race is peculiar and exclusive.

Such a being as I have pourtrayed, you and I have more than once seen; much oftener have we seen those who resemble him in every particular but his wealth, who vehemently adopt his principles and pursue him in his career, though they attain not to his accidental success. Indeed, how few managers and overseers are there throughout the West Indies

whose views are materially different, or whose acquirements are in any great degree superior. I would coolly ask, if it is reasonable that men of this description shall tell the mother country that it is from them she is to learn how far she is capable of exercising a sound judgment respecting her colonies, and from them she is to receive permission how far she is to act upon that judgment.

Let it not be supposed that I despise local knowledge; to a certain extent it is not only useful but necessary on all questions. That extent, however, in my humble opinion, goes a much shorter way on subjects of a large and general nature than our brethren are willing to allow. So far as it goes the public are always ready to allow it candidly its full share of importance, and so far likewise there is at all times, now-a-days, abundance of it at their command.

But such persons as I have described are not the only characters who keenly take a side in the present controversy. West Indians are very generally united in it, and among that class of men there are, and always have been,

numerous individuals of the best education, and who have lived much in Europe, in good company;—nay, there are not a few planters, who though they have raised themselves from beginnings to which they now have to look far down, have always made a good library an object of their ambition; and in the midst of circumstances certainly peculiarly unfavourable, have the merit of having done much to cultivate and improve their minds. Both of these large and respectable bodies can boast of men, who to ample fortune add most of the requisites for commanding estimation and consequence in the first classes of society. How is it that such men as these, upon matters relating to colonization, allow themselves to be carried away by ideas so narrow and local, that they would be ashamed of them on any other subject? The enigma can only be solved by admitting, what indeed very evidently appears, that their understandings are clouded by an unhappy prejudice, warped by a mistaken view of their interest, and, under a sort of compulsion, carried away by that necessity of being *in the fashion*, which party spirit always unhappily creates. I may take another

opportunity of enlarging a little on this point. In the meantime it is sufficient to observe, that the want of temper and moderation too constantly displayed by these gentlemen, shews them to be not in that state of mind in which they can avail themselves of the advantages they possess; or in which indeed any persons can think or speak wisely. In short it is evident, respecting West Indians, that some from want of knowledge, some from want of coolness, and a great number from both united, must rank in a place very far below what they conceive belongs to them, and must leave the claim with rather a small proportion of the total body; if there is to be a general congress held by the world upon colonial affairs.

But all this talk about qualifications is little to the purpose, and I have allowed it to detain me longer than I intended. Let us come to the point. There is a very short road to it.

The West India body are brought by certain opponents before the bar of the public. They say the public are not fit judges of the case. Let them be asked, Who are? The loud reply is, Ourselves, and ourselves alone. Gentlemen,

it is all very well—you may be perfectly capable—but you forget that here you are a party. Be kind enough to sit down and be quiet:—being one of the parties in the cause, really you cannot possibly be constituted the judges.

If it be true that none but colonists can judge of colonial matters, then West Indians, to be consistent, ought to reject the authority belonging to the king in council, as the last resort in colonial appeals. Certainly neither the sovereign nor his council have lived upon plantations. Nay, the same sort of objection would apply to every court all over the earth, in every common law suit. A merchant, mechanic, or tradesman, suing or being sued by his neighbour, might object, that the judge is incapable of understanding the merits of the case, because he was not bred to all or to any one of the professions in question.—Juries, and even special juries, are not exempt from the sweeping objection. It is needless to say more on this point. The West Indian legislatures and courts themselves do not proceed upon such extravagant notions respecting the local causes which come before them. They there reckon,

as the rest of mankind do, that judgment is entirely an operation of intellect acting on information. Let them submit to the same rule which they themselves unite in making universal. They have a cause before the tribunal of the public of Britain. Let them indeed, by all means, bring all the information into court which they possibly can ; it will receive every sort of attention. Let them state the deep interest they have in the issue of the question ; nothing can be more proper, and the representation will undoubtedly have all due weight allowed to it. Only let them, as a party, conduct themselves moderately, and in so far, at least, respectfully, as to refrain from attempting to get up into the bench, and to take the pronouncing of the judgment upon themselves.

There is not a single particular in which colonists are unfit, in respect of which the people of England are not completely fit and capable, to decide upon every great and leading point in colonial affairs. By the people of England, I mean, of course, that body of men called the public, made up of the reading,

thinking, active, intelligent members of the higher and middling classes of society. The objection which is made, that they are not interested, is in fact the very recommendation which, as judges, they ought to possess. They are warped by no bias or pre-conception, influenced by no local views or habits, agitated by no irritation;—they are sufficiently removed, as it were, from the scene before them to view the whole with a correct and comprehending eye;—above all, they are possessed of every fact which bears upon the case, and are fairly disposed to receive all those facts into their consideration. This last most important qualification demands particular notice, especially as there are some very striking circumstances attending it.

It is a truth equally undeniable and remarkable, that every inhabitant of the colonies who distinguishes himself by colonial information of a general and extensive nature, derives his valuable knowledge from Europe.—This is not merely owing to the want of booksellers and public libraries in our smaller islands, but owing to physical circumstances which affect the great

community of Jamaica itself. It is in Europe only ~~that all~~ the facts which exist on any given subject in all our various transatlantic settlements are, in the first instance, or can be, collected and embodied. The winds and currents which prevail throughout the Caribbean seas forbid the intercourse of island with island. Take the instance of two of our oldest and most important colonies, Barbadoes and Jamaica: the passage of a merchant vessel from the latter to the former island direct is a thing unknown, perhaps since either the one or the other was inhabited; and were it not for the packet, and other opportunities, from England, Jamaica would hear as seldom of Barbadoes, because, although, according to the natural expressions of that part of the world, you may easily run *down*, you cannot beat *up* again, without performing a voyage by the coast of North America. The internal trade among the various parts of the Antilles cannot pay for such circuitous navigation; the consequence is, that between the greater number of them there is no trade and no communication whatever. Planters in Trinidad and Tobago, in Grenada and St. Vincent's, know little or nothing of

what is done by the people of St. Kitt's, except through Europe. Is it not striking to see nature herself thus pointing all our colonists to the mother country, as the depot where intelligence from all their various residencies must be collected, and the centre from whence their own knowledge of each other must be drawn? Happy would it have been, if thus deriving mutual colonial information through Europe, and European information along with it, those Englishmen had kept themselves in the sunshine of English light, and in the exercise of every valuable English attachment. But unfortunately, an indifference to all information has rather proved the result of their circumstances; and so strongly has this habit grown up, that sometimes it even prevails in cases where the physical barriers to communication, which we have alluded to, do not exist. A remarkable and lamentable instance of this prevails, to the present day, in a matter which well deserves special notice. Indeed, the subject is of such importance that, perhaps, it ought not to be thus collaterally introduced; yet even its magnitude presses it early on our attention.

You know that so far back as the year

1732, the German church of the Moravians established missions for the religious instruction of the slaves in the Danish islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. Jan. Twenty four years afterwards they began to labour in our colony of Antigua. In the three small first mentioned islands, the negroes belonging to that church amount, at this time, to upwards of 12,000; and in Antigua alone, to nearly that large number. During the long periods which I have mentioned, the planters in all those places, have had such proof of the fidelity, obedience, and good conduct of their instructed population, that a Christian slave always bears a higher value than any other, and the Danish government have often declared, that the baptized negroes are a greater security to them "than their forts." The same philanthropic, though humble, teachers, established themselves very early in Surinam, and at a later period in St. Kitt's; besides persevering in attempts not equally successful in Jamaica and Barbadoes.

Now although thus the greater part of a century and every limit of the West Indies have

beheld this most singular and disinterested, this most useful and peaceable undertaking in all its stages; yet I venture to affirm, from what I have seen in various places, that a very large proportion of managers and overseers throughout our colonies, never heard of a Moravian teacher or a Moravian negro.* To place my position in a form more capable of proof, let any man make a tour through the West Indies, and he will find every where, except near the very spots where the missions are established, individuals claiming considerable respectability in the above lines of life, to whom all his information respecting the history of the instructors and their proselytes will be entirely new. The

* This assertion must now be made with some qualification. Since it was first written the publications of Mr. Marryat and his auxiliaries have been circulated I understand pretty freely, through the colonies, carrying with them the appellations of the Sectarian teachers, the tendency of whose proceedings is so principal a part of their discussions. I have no doubt that in consequence, many a colonist who never thought of the subject before, may have said to his neighbour, Pray, friend, what is a Moravian? How the neighbour and friend may have answered a question so puzzling, I shall not presume to determine.

fact is, that those men do not read, and will not inquire on such subjects. Nay, I am sorry to say that on this particular point the charge justly extends itself too generally to proprietors. In various parts of the West Indies the footsteps of the Moravians have been closely followed by a set of men from our own country of the same excellent views ; and I do believe, generally speaking, the same peaceable, wise, and irreproachable conduct ; the despised methodists. Methinks I already see some countenances kindle with anger at the very name. We hear at almost every proprietor's table, such is the fashion of the day at present, of the danger of missionaries. But how few are the proprietors who have coolly and dispassionately sat down as they would do in any other matter, to examine into the facts of the case. Where are those of them who have taken pains to make themselves masters of all that has passed on the important subject of instruction in the Danish islands for upwards of *eighty years*, and in Antigua for *sixty* ? Is there, perhaps, a single one who has calmly and gravely inquired in London into the discipline of the methodist body—the instructions they give their mission-

aries, and the responsibility for regular and prudent conduct under which they hold them? Why are not such rational inquiries made by men of understanding? If certain facts exist, they cannot be annihilated by the shutting of the eyes:—on the other hand, it would be as foolish to attempt to advance reforms of any sort by unfounded assertions, as it is in the opposers of reforms to raise unfounded objections and false accusations. On every subject the facts of the case must and will, one day, speak for themselves, and by them the decision must ultimately stand. Thus it is either true, or it is not true, that certain old missions have been successful in certain colonies. It is either true, or it is not true, that disturbances have been for a given period unknown in those colonies, while they have prevailed in others. It is either true, or it is not true, that after the late unhappy insurrection in Barbadoes, the legislature of Antigua addressed their governor, detailing their long experienced tranquillity, expressing confidence in their future security, and ascribing both, to the diffusion of christianity among the slaves.* West Indians may be ignorant of the

* The particulars of this address shall be given in a future letter.

colonial facts of nearly a century, or knowing them, may disregard them. But if they do, and if the government and people of this country, taking pains to collect such facts, consult them as of great weight in the determination of colonial questions, I confess it humbly appears to me probable that posterity will decide, that the latter have shewn themselves more capable than the former of forming a correct judgment upon colonial affairs.

P. S. After some things said in this letter, perhaps it is not improper to add, that I am not a methodist, nor a dissenter of any denomination; but I am not ashamed to avow sincere regard for that body of Christians. I do not mean to imply, what indeed no man will say of either them or the Moravians, that since the respective sects arose, every individual among them has been free from extravagance. This is the disease of religious zeal—of a principle equally noble and useful, though liable to disease like every thing human. But is there any other case in which a sound constitution is

reviled, because it may one day prove susceptible of some malady? Let it be remembered too that it is not one sort of malady only to which our nature is subject. West Indians regard religious men as under a fever of the mind—they forget the solemn truth that there may be another distemper—fatal and dead palsy.

What would have been at this day the state of this happy and exalted country, if religious zeal had not, in the early ages of Christianity, come from the shores of the Mediterranean to enlighten our Pagan forefathers?

* Since this letter was written an able pamphlet has been published, entitled "A Defence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missions," by R. Watson. It is an answer to the attacks of Mr. Marryat and his friends, and will carry satisfaction to every unprejudiced mind.

LETTER III.

ON COLONIAL BONDAGE.

I SHALL be asked, are we then to turn all our young practical planters into as many plodding students?—I certainly see no occasion for their being intimate with Terence or Horace. And yet without being particularly so, some of them possibly may even already have heard that the question has been answered long ago. “Nothing is to be carried to an extreme:” “The golden mean” is certainly more estimable than many other things of which gold is the recommendation. It is indeed because this doctrine is my own, that I say without hesitation, that if reading were more the fashion among the middling and lower orders of whites in the colonies, it would be not only well in many

respects for themselves, but in some respects for their employers. How rare is it to see on plantations, even those useful books which have been published on subjects connected with plantership itself! This topic will come again in our way—at present I must turn to a subject of a more general nature.

I began my first letter by avowing my attachment to the cause of amelioration in our colonial system.

It is not, however, to bondage in itself that I object: this I am desirous of stating in explicit terms.

The sentiment is one which may appear to some persons to require explanation. They may be ready to ask me if liberty is not the chief blessing of life?—I answer that I feel its value as strongly as any other free-born Briton in existence, and could expatiate on the animating subject as warmly as any sharer or admirer whatever of our national privileges. But I am not a theorist, and I sat down to write not of things as I might wish them, but of things as they are. I find the population of the West Indies in abject slavery, I see it to be evidently

impossible to give them sudden freedom with any safety even to themselves. I treat therefore of slaves, and of those comforts of which as slaves they may be made partakers.

Nor can I help suggesting for a moment in passing, since prejudices on all subjects seem to be inseparable from human nature, whether it may not be possible for prejudices even in favor of freedom itself to be apt to act somewhat blindly. In this happy country where our fathers long ago wrought out personal liberty for themselves and us, we have in the course of ages advanced from thence to the greatest degree of political liberty that ever any nation knew. Are we not sometimes in consequence ready to think somewhat overweeningly of our circumstances, as if Providence could not make any of his creatures happy without an exact model of them? We first wish that personal liberty should prevail every where on earth; and we follow up the thought by secretly wishing that something like the British constitution should every where follow it. We forget that our own enjoyment of our privileges rises out of our peculiar habits, feelings, and bodily tempera-

ment, those things which in fact were the instruments of their creation ; and that if we could divide the whole globe into districts, and place each exactly like ourselves, under King, Lords, and Commons, we should not spread comfort universally, till we had first altered the laws of nature, annihilated the effects of climate, and melted down the characters of the human race into one mould. While I throw out this remark I do not mean to say that there is not an obvious and wide difference between the greater blessing of personal, and the smaller of political liberty ; I only wish to hint at the constant necessity of sober thinking in all discussions relating to important changes in society.

In order that it may be possible for a human being in personal bondage to be comfortable, two things are absolutely necessary ; 1st. that he never have known freedom ; 2d. that he have a kind master. The latter of these conditions is not sufficient without the former. To the man who has once drank in liberty with his breath, " Slavery disguise itself as it will, is still a bitter draught." It is impossible not to add,

therefore, let every West Indian who has in him the soul of a Briton or a man give his hearty aid to render the abolition acts effectual, that no freeman ever again may become a slave; and if any thing better than registry can be devised for this purpose let him bring it forward.

But the conditions being granted that the slave has never known any thing but slavery, and that he is kindly and considerately treated, it is unquestionable that a considerable degree of comfort may be attained in the state of bondage.—The fact has been witnessed, and I rejoice to declare myself one of those who have witnessed it. Indeed the proposition is self-evident, even to those whose only acquaintance with the subject is that of reasoning. Wherever absolute power exists, there is necessarily included in it the capability of conferring happiness, as there is also that of inflicting evil; the one or the other according to the disposition of the possessor of authority so uncontrouled. True it is that power like this is too much for such a being as man to possess over his fellow-man, and hence all the miseries that have filled

our colonies, hence the necessity of the watchfulness of colonial legislatures over individual colonists, and especially of the mother country over both. But still it is undeniable that good *may* be experienced as well as evil, that a kind master may turn his power to every purpose of benevolence, and that thus a slave who has been a slave from his infancy *may* be very comfortable. If, therefore, any persons arguing from their own feelings and ideas, suppose that the mere *consciousness of slavery* perpetually haunts the mind of *such a bondsman*, and even in the most favourable circumstances renders him necessarily unhappy, they are completely mistaken. Were it possible that the interference of the British public in colonial affairs were ever to proceed upon such a mistake, then I should be one of the first to call it *undue interference*. But all the intelligent friends of the negro race in this country know, as well as benevolent West Indians do, that bondage begun with birth, and carried on under a truly kind and considerate master, is a state which will bear a comparison with many other conditions of human life. Ask a negro in

such circumstances if he would wish to be free—and probably he will reply to you by some such questions as the following, put in his own dialect;—Why should I wish it? Do you think me a fool? Who would then give me food and clothing and lodging? What hospital should I lie in, and what doctor would attend me when sick? Who would provide the same things for my young children? and when I am no longer able to work, who would nourish my old age?

It is impossible to survey for a moment this picture of slavery without lamenting that it is not more commonly to be seen. It is equally impossible to avoid remarking that every West Indian who holds it out as the picture of colonial slavery on his estate, binds himself by this very act to support the cause of amelioration. He cannot surely say that the above is the universal language of negroes, and he is bound therefore to do every thing in his power to make it become so.

That slavery is an evil no man will deny. Yet when tempered with all the alleviations of which it is capable, it may be classed with

the evils which are called tolerable. There is little of unmixed good in the present state of mankind ; and even the beneficial results which we see produced in human affairs, are often produced not by a simple and direct good, but by a sort of collision of evils which blunt the edges of each other, and fall not only harmless but changed into somewhat salutary after their conflict. No country affords stronger instances of this truth than our own, where the possible evils of sovereign tyranny and popular clamour are pitched against each other ; both are shorn of their power of mischief, and the result is our admirable constitution. The same blessings cannot indeed be found in the same degree any where else under heaven ; but a general law of this sort seems to pervade more or less every condition of mankind, and thus to render habitable a world into which for wise and inscrutable purposes, evil has been permitted to enter. From the operation of this merciful and wise law of providence, slavery itself, personal as well as political slavery, is not exempt. Among untutored tribes, the freedom which is enjoyed in a state of nature, is not an universal

freedom; the wife and children are the slaves of the husband and father. Compare with one of these barbarians, a barbarian born in slavery: he himself has not equal privileges; but his family have a preferable lot; and by the abridgment of the enjoyments of one individual, the comfort of many is promoted. It may seem extraordinary that the wife and children should be the better for a circumstance which at first sight appears only to render them doubly slaves. Nevertheless the effect is undoubted. In looking up to a master who is owner of the whole family, the subordinate members look up to a protector against the tyranny of a brutal husband and father. And this important protection, even a bad master is from obvious motives, generally willing to extend. Here the owner stands in the relation which in a free country is occupied by the magistrate. Nay this protection is more prompt, powerful, and effectual, than that of any magistrate in any circumstances can possibly be. Feeble and tardy is the remedy which in our own land of freedom the law gives to a suffering and terrified wife against a ferocious husband.

Much must have been endured by the poor woman before that sort of legal proof can be established which it is necessary to produce as the foundation of a demand of security for future good conduct, and much risk must be still incurred by her that the security may be little regarded; indeed its forfeiture and possibly the victim's life may go together. Often have I thought, when I have met at night perhaps a drunken carter, going home full of oaths and greedy of quarrels, reeking from his cups, and by the sound of his whip over his horse, preparing his trembling and ragged wife and children to expect its exercise over themselves: often have I thought, O could there be placed over the head of this savage, a master who should have power to say to him, 'No, sirrah, you shall not; this woman and her babes *shall* have their due; the earnings belonging to them shall not go to madness, and misery, and starvation!' I must be forgiven by my country, if I have sometimes thus for a moment felt as if the land of bondage could in one instance claim a blessing as peculiarly belonging to her rather than Britain herself! I do not mean to push this

this idea far. Alas, the West Indies will not bear me out in any but a momentary comparison. But if happily there the whites exercised the same control over their own spirits which they maintain over the male negroes, it would certainly be no weak consideration in favour of bondage, that wives and children form a very great and important proportion of the uncivilized population of our colonies.

Slavery is a sort of continued childhood. I do not talk of the family where avarice has entered and made a cruel step-mother: I speak of bondage as it *may be* and as it *sometimes is*, and mean to say that in the case of slaves, guidance needs not to be tyranny, any more than in the case of children. I own, indeed, that if I had it in my option, I would not trust any man with such power as belongs to the colonial master. But finding that power in existence, I am happy to find that cruelty is not necessary to its exercise, nor revolution therefore desirable for its overturn. Only let oppression and caprice be banished, and happiness does not depend on external circumstances: bondage in itself does not destroy it. Man is the creature of habit;

and I have seen slaves, to whom the gift of freedom would have been as the deprivation of a father's roof to a child.

Why do we ever behold any other slaves? The absolute and entire dependence in which these poor people hang upon us, ought surely to engage every feeling of our hearts in their favour. Unhappily, the dependence is too absolute, and the human heart is generally too selfish. But, sometimes, we do meet with the truly humane and enlightened proprietor of negroes, who is in fact the father of a large family. When such a man gratifies a benevolent disposition, in indulging this idea, he looks round him as an antient patriarch may be supposed to have done on his hundreds of children. Were proprietors, in general, such characters, what a happy country might the West Indies be! Then would the term Emancipation, now so dangerous to be used, lose all its danger; I had almost said, all its use. Out of such a state of society, the thing would arise as naturally, and almost as silently, as the stalk of corn rises from the seed. An orderly peasantry would be universally attached to proprietors, who would

then find it safe to sit down and calculate how much cheaper the labour of freemen always is, than the labour of slaves. The calculation would include no loss of capital; for, though men, women, and children, would no longer make a part of the inventories of estates, the land would acquire all the additional value, because the cultivators would have no more wish to emigrate from the spot, than a free race, the well known gallant inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland have, when encouraged to remain at home. In short, in this mutual exchange of attachment and confidence, freedom would not be seized on by the negro, but only accepted by him; and he would desire, perhaps, rather less of it than his master might be disposed to give him. Knowing the blessings he has possessed in his former state, and fearful of the risks of a new condition, he would, in many cases, lay hold of independence with a timid hand;—but in every case his confidence would gradually increase. Surely there is not either European or West Indian, who has any feeling for a common nature, but must rejoice in the idea, that the day, however remote, may be on

wing, when a race of mankind shall by degrees emerge from what is at the best mental childhood, to a state of manhood, and shall enjoy their expanded faculties, rendered safe by previous civilization.

I am allowing myself, however, I must confess, to be led away by ideas which may appear somewhat Utopian. Yet that there is a probability that a future age may see a happier system engrafted safely and peaceably on our colonies, if the whites will only now begin, and steadily continue, to reform their own conduct, is an idea which I trust will appear not to be extravagant when we shall come to consider the African character; an enquiry I mean to enter into in a future letter. Meantime these matters of speculation and futurity are not my subject, though I could not avoid sliding into them. I wish to call in my thoughts, and settle them on considering what are the plain duties of the present moment. I am desirous of coming to the sober and practical enquiry, what it is that we can do for our enslaved population, on the supposition that it is never to be any thing else than enslaved. This is the channel into which, in my

humble opinion, true and wise kindness for our negroes commands us at present to turn chiefly our thoughts for their benefit. We are in the situation of an army which has got into a difficulty ; we must take care that the evils of our retreat do not exceed the thoughtlessness of our advance. I am quite clear that to put an end to slavery happily, if this is ever to be done, *the less emancipation shall be spoken of the better.* All parties should suppose it to be a thing *in nubibus*—very much out of mortal sight at the present moment. I am clear that it is not by talking about freedom, but by quietly and gradually getting our black population into a state of society in which freedom shall hold out to their view as little as possible of advantage, that is to say, shall appear to bring with it as few additional bodily comforts, and as many additional mental cares, as possible, that the happiness of those multitudes of people is to be promoted, as well as the safety of the whites secured, in this great change of mutual condition. I know nothing that the present generation of proprietors can do (I go no farther than the present generation), but do their utmost

to improve the state of their people considering it as a *fixed state of bondage*. And if they do their utmost in this view, much, very much, may be done in favour of the future—whatever the future may contain.

But how shall those proprietors be persuaded who need persuasion? how shall unkind masters be rendered kind? Alas, at first sight the question seems not less full of despair than if we were asking how we should succeed in washing their negroes white! Yet I should have strong hope of a favourable change, if benevolent West Indians could be prevailed on to act in a more prominent manner than they do. They conceal themselves too much. Let them be intreated to consider whether they are not guilty of great breach of duty in doing so. They use their own negroes well, but they often suffer a neighbour to use his negroes ill, without either private or public notice. The legislatures of the colonies frequently make regulations in favour of slaves; but, supposing that there never was a single instance of insincerity in this matter, of what avail are enactments when people will not do their duty to the community in seeing

them fulfilled? They are deterred by considering the character of an informer as odious. But let them act openly, and this bugbear vanishes. Let a man say to his neighbour, 'I tell you honestly I will inform against you, and I will give my name with the information, for I will not suffer inhumanity to pass before my eyes with impunity.' Would there be any thing in this manly and noble conduct unbecoming a gentleman? Let them use persuasion also. Let them strongly point out the 'pecuniary' advantages accruing to themselves from their paternal system of plantership. Let them take pains to shew how much usefulness to the master as well as happiness to the slave may be extracted from temperate bondage. Let them unite together likewise and strengthen each others hands. In all countries and in all affairs it holds true that individuals can do little, but that associations can do much. Let societies be formed in our different colonies for the payment of all necessary expences in cases of information against oppressors, and for the protection of those persons who would wish from good motives to bring such information before the legal authorities, but by

reason of their situation in life cannot prudently hold the above open language. Such institutions would assume no authority themselves; they would be in fact of no other nature than the associations of shopkeepers and householders not uncommon in this country for the purpose of detecting thieves and bringing them to justice. They may have the denomination of "Societies for the aid and enforcement of the laws enacted relating to Slavery." Let those societies procure support and employment for such men of proper character as would on many past occasions have brought crimes to light, but durst not tell what they had witnessed. A single individual is not sufficient; but a body of men are completely able to overawe revengeful and even powerful delinquents, insomuch that the very existence of such institutions might bring it about that they would have little of their unpleasant duty to perform. The fear of shame and the love of popularity might at once increase the number of members and diminish that of objects. Thus might kindness yet become *the fashion*, and inhumanity become a disgrace. If things can be brought to this, we shall have ad-

vanced to the utmost point which I for my part feel that I can soberly and steadily look forward to. It is I think attainable; and it is so desirable, that to the attainment of it, it is well worth while to sacrifice at present all other speculations, however pleasing. A happy community of slaves would make a safe and tranquil and improving country. Nothing else can give security to the West Indies—but this undoubtedly can.

I would now wish to enter into an examination of the different branches of that amelioration by means of which proprietors may reasonably expect to produce this desirable result to themselves and their negroes. I shall do this in my next letter.

LETTER IV.

ON THE TREATMENT OF SLAVES.

I BEGIN my observations on the subject of the amelioration of the condition of negroes, with remarking, that I of course take it for granted, that the desire of pecuniary profit is to continue to be, as it has always been, the foundation of every scheme of colonization. It is a desire as fair and laudable in itself, when properly acted upon, as it is in fact inseparable from our nature; and although benevolence carries much reward in its own bosom, as is well known to every man who courts practical acquaintance with it, yet I am not so extravagant as to suppose, that people are to be willing to spend the prime of their days in an unhealthy climate, for the mere love of the negro race.

But I think it appears quite clear, from the disastrous history of the multitudes of individuals who have been ruined by the West Indies (as far exceeding in number those who have made rich, as the blanks do the great prizes in a lottery); and from the unextinguished and inextinguishable debt to the mother country, which the last one hundred years have accumulated against the colonies, that the road to a fortune, which has been unhappily the beaten path, has proved itself completely the wrong one; and that, if the point in view is to be in future attained by the generality of travellers, a totally different route must be pursued by them. In fact, we have turned our backs upon success; so that it was impossible we could arrive at it. In colonization the very first principle is, to have a thriving population. In British colonization in the West Indies, speaking generally, every thing else has been attended to, and this has been the only thing that has been neglected. The result has confirmed the old maxim in morals, that the substantial interest of men is connected with their duties; and that if they neglect the latter, they sooner or later suffer in the former.

Much has been written on colonial subjects; and from a great deal of it, a philanthropic planter may gather useful hints. Two publications occur to my recollection, as having been lately given to the world, more avowedly than others on the subject of benefit to the negroes: I mean Steel and Dickson's *Mitigation of Slavery*; and Collins's *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves in the Sugar Colonies*. In both these works there is much valuable matter.*

For my own part, I am strongly disposed to recommend one single maxim, as capable, if thoroughly followed, of curing every evil, and accomplishing every good. Let the slave be the chief object of his master; let the health and comfort of him and his family occupy, on every occasion, the first thought; let the land and its

* The first mentioned book would be improved by being abridged and methodized. Mr. Steele's plans in managing his negroes were evidently so wise, that to learn, as we do, that pecuniary success attended them, is no more than what must be expected by any man who studies human nature:—it is therefore much to be regretted that a certain degree of quaintness and obscurity hangs over the hints he left behind him.

produce, be always only secondary matters. No man must be allowed to say, that this will be sacrificing to theory the practical exertions whereby we are to pay our debts and make our fortunes; such an objection is the very same delusion which has ruined colonists, and injured their creditors, ever since British colonization began. Surely that period has been sufficiently long, and sufficiently disastrous. I maintain that no other recommendation of my principle is necessary, than that it is exactly the reverse of the maxim which has been hitherto so constantly and so fatally followed. Even if this is not enough, I have another important ground on which I recommend it:—it will assimilate the habits of colonists to the ideas of the people of this country; it will take away that opposition of feeling which prevails between the two parties; it will annihilate all contention, and leave the West Indies in peace.

The subject of amelioration naturally divides itself into a few principal branches. Referring to the larger works I have alluded to,—I shall make a few observations on each of these.

The first is, the state of bondage itself. The

legal condition of the slave ought, without further delay, to be so far improved by the colonial legislatures, that he shall not be liable to be sold *singly* for the debt of his master. It is the disgrace of West Indian law, that slaves still continue to be chattels; that families are liable to be detached from their connections, and even individuals to be for ever separated from their families, at the will of a master or his creditor.

It has been objected to the humane plan of rendering them "*adscripti Glebæ*," that it is sometimes necessary for the proprietor, and even beneficial to the negroes, that an old settlement be abandoned, and a new piece of land cultivated. But let the slave be attached to the *Gang*, and the objection falls to the ground;—let him be legally inseparable from the *body of negroes* belonging to the original estate, except it be his own wish to be withdrawn from them; in such a case, for instance, as that of a negro applying to his master to sell him to another proprietor, the owner perhaps of his wife.

2. Food, clothing, and lodging. As I am not writing a treatise, it is not my intention to enlarge on these points, but only to name them

as matters of the first importance, in which we too often see room for improvement; especially the great article of a full supply of food. To prepare the most ample and abundant stock of provisions, is surely the very foundation of wise plantership. To carry this even to the utmost excess, will not be waste. In a climate where the sun and rain act so powerfully, that to raise any esculent, nothing more is requisite than to cast the seed into the ground; and where, in short, except in disastrous seasons, plenty must be experienced as a matter of course, if the benevolent efforts of the elements are not withstood by mismanagement; surely it is reasonable to let the labourer enjoy unqualified abundance. If quantities of live stock, of all kinds, are in consequence seen increasing round his hut, the master will feel, in the manner in which his own work is performed, all the benefit of the health, the spirits, and the prosperity, of the negro.

The cooking of a nourishing hot mess every day for the young and the sick, is an indispensable part of the economy of every well regulated plantation. The emaciated negroes, called dirt-eaters, whose acid state of stomach craves every

thing of the neutralizing nature of chalk, have often received that universal West Indian panacea, a flogging.—Poor creatures,—what they need is abundance of nutritive food; this will restore their diseased stomachs, and leave them no more desirous to eat dirt than their masters.

I may just take notice here, in so many words, of the vast importance of having an apartment in the hospital appropriated as a lying-in room, and encouraging the pregnant women, by rewards, and by the comforts of the place (for fair means are better than foul), to be delivered there, rather than in their own houses;—many a child will thus be saved from perishing by locked jaw.

3. Plantation labour. That the master may receive a reasonable quantity of work on the one hand, and on the other hand that the negro may be free from oppression, no plan seems equal to that of task-work. Some pains are requisite in applying this plan to all the kinds of labour carried on on a plantation, in various circumstances of season and soil, by different ages and sexes; but if pains are taken, (and what valuable object can be otherwise

attained ?) there is no insuperable difficulty in forming regular tables of task-work, that shall embrace all ordinary circumstances. When the negro has finished his task for the day, he must be regularly paid if he does any extra work ;— this moderate pay being also fixed according to a regular table.

It may at first sight seem objectionable to accept of extra work, even supposing the negro willing to give it. But in answer to this, 1st, the previous task is supposed not to be burdensome. 2dly, There is a great difference between willing and heartless labour ; this must prevail strongly in slavery, for it is known, even among freemen. In this country, a piece of work is always done more quickly by job than by time ; nor do the labourers generally suffer by the exertion. Stimulus of mind actually seems to supply strength of body ; a circumstance, by the bye, certainly capable of being urged as a strong argument in favour of freedom, as the only state suited to the constitution and nature of man. The want of this stimulus is a radical and incurable loss in the employment of bondsmen ; and the more it is supplied in plan-

tation-work, the more benefit will arise to the proprietor. This seems to have been well proved by the deceased colonist, already alluded to, Mr. Steel, of Barbadoes. There is no subject more worthy of the deep consideration of enlightened West Indians than this.

4. We must be longer detained by the consideration of the next article; namely, Discipline. In the managing of all numerous bodies of men, this is an engine absolutely necessary. Authority must be established. It must be submitted to by the party governed; and that even for his own good. But what is discipline?—According to some men's notions in the West Indies, it seems to have no meaning but one,—severity, or rather cruelty; applied with little discrimination to all offences. The whites are accustomed to the sight of blood, and the negroes to the endurance of pain, till in both there is produced a degree of indifference, to the one effect and the other, such as really appears subversive of all the purposes for which discipline is truly useful in any community, namely, the production of regular conduct, and the enjoyment of safety and peace. Private

vindictive infliction on one side, and unconvinced sullen submission on the other, can never, in their irritated conflict, produce public tranquillity. I know I shall be told, that there are many crimes, for which, in the West Indies, a negro is flogged, and in England a man is hanged :—this is quite true. But in England it is always *the law* that acts ;—and though it often acts severely (who will say it does not ?) no bad passion is fostered in the mind of a single individual against the unhappy victim ; the morals of society, therefore, do not suffer ; on the contrary, a feeling of sympathy and awe pervades the public mind when an execution takes place, and the event is reckoned worthy of being recorded in all the newspapers. But in the West Indies, *where every house has its executioner*, the exercise of the office, in inflicting punishments not capital, is so continual, that it passes as a common event. While the dreadful whip is obeying the hasty impulse of individual passion, in the moment of offence and the moment of anger, its horrid sound echoing in the towns every day from one or another of their streets, harrows up the feelings of some inhabitants to

a degree which imbitters their lives, and hardens the hearts of all the rest, till they become utterly callous to human suffering. What stranger has not shuddered to see, that the amusement of the white children, instead of top, hoop, or ball, is sometimes an imitation of a flogging? A stick or a stone is laid down as the supposed slave, and the pleasure of the young adept consists in lashing it with a whip. If the real scene were not too common, should we ever see such a ferocious employment the play of a child?

A few observations on the public criminal jurisprudence of the colonies may be a proper introduction to the subject of plantation discipline.

It cannot be denied that severity is sometimes necessary in all codes of law, because crime is sometimes deep. But in a well regulated code it never is the distinguishing feature. Of such a system, the great and leading characteristics are, its being clearly defined, universally known, impartially executed. As to cruelty, it is utterly excluded from all enlightened jurisprudence. Law, to make itself truly revered, must carry with it a sort of solemn calmness and high dignity, such as forbid its stooping to those

savage acts which have the appearance of rage. If it once subjects itself to this resemblance, it loses its respectability ; and what is more, the sufferer loses the degradation which ought always to be preserved as the principal part of his sentence ; the law in fact changes characters with him, and the robe of dignity of which it has stripped itself, seems to fall upon his shoulders. We now behold a fury wreaking its impotent vengeance on a being who presently rises before the minds of the spectators as a hero and a martyr. I am sorry to say, that West Indian criminal courts have not all perceived this truth. I am ashamed, as a colonist, that cruelty and torture, and lingering death in every refined form, have in the cases of state criminals, disgraced, at one time or another, the legal proceedings of every part of the West Indies, and are not, to this hour, universally expunged from them. If there be one sight more humiliating than another, it is to see European magistrates sitting over the mangling of a victim, whose constancy of mind rises superior to all the fiend-like ingenuity of his tormentors. Who is the barbarian here, and who the exalted

character? In fact, crime is thus ennobled, and obtains a victory over law. Every such victory costs the West Indies dear. Ferocity becomes the inmate of the European bosom, and defiance that of the African. New oppressions are engendered, and new and more dangerous revolts arise. By endeavouring to reach too far, we overreach ourselves. Let man in authority be content with his power; it goes not beyond the extinction of life; let him wisely take care that this be attended with no eclat; let him yield to the truth, that the utmost he can do is to give to his criminal fellow man, death in its most humiliating form. When this is done with solemnity and fellow-feeling, the impression is complete; the effect can be carried no farther in this world. The Africans are as sensible as we ourselves are of the propriety of a just and reasonable sentence; this fact is proverbial, even on every plantation; and no less sagaciously does their judgment refuse to be overawed, when law appears to be power without respectability.

Similar abuses have prevailed in the discipline of plantations. Excessive stripes make "our brother seem vile to us." That Great

Being who knew and formed the heart of man, told us, it would be so. It is true, indeed, the whippings legally allowed to be inflicted by private individuals, are in most of the colonies limited to thirty-nine lashes, the number mentioned in the ancient sacred law. But was the Jewish rod an instrument as formidable as the long cutting whip of the planter? Even if it was so, what competent witnesses are now a-days present to secure obedience to the enactment, in a country where negro evidence is not receivable against white men? Who stands security that the punishment shall not be illegally repeated even on the same day? It seems to me, that every considerate man must set himself against the use of this brutal instrument, and will naturally have recourse to other modes of punishment. When he is under the necessity of employing this one, he will lay down to himself a rule *never to act at the moment of offence and of passion*, but always to order the culprit into confinement till the next day. Another good rule, is to keep a book, wherein all crimes and all punishments are recorded. This not only operates as a check upon the master him-

self, which a wise man, sensible of the infirmities of human nature, will be glad of, but affords an opportunity, by reading the record publicly to the gang at stated intervals, to renew the shame of punishment when thought proper; a measure of no small efficacy among the young.

To supersede the beastly whip, the best punishment is solitary confinement, with or without the stocks, according to circumstances. But to render it effectual, the prison of an estate must be a strong brick building, consisting of dark cells, each of proper dimensions, for a man to lie down in.*

Many negroes would rather endure a flogging than such a confinement. This was long ago publicly declared by West India gentlemen,

* I have heard of an estate having such a building on the following plan. The proprietor was one of those who think it right to give religious instruction to their negroes. The lower story was the prison, or rather the row of prisons, for the dividing walls of the solitary cells were sufficiently thick to prevent all intercourse. Immediately above was the chapel. Over all were the overseers' apartments. Thus the culprits were thoroughly looked after; and if ever any sound penetrated the boards of their roof, it was the sound of instruction.

those who gave their evidence before the House of Commons, among the adversaries to the abolition of the slave trade. Indeed, when one looks back to the language they employed, one would be very apt to suppose, that the fact they set forth, was at that time very generally acknowledged and acted upon throughout the West Indies, and that the whip had actually got very much into discredit and disuse.* This was twenty-eight years ago; and yet let any man contemplate how the practice stands, alas, at the present day!

I have adverted to the propriety of having the prison a building by itself. Nothing surely can be more absurd than the common custom of fixing the stocks in one of the apartments of the hospital, and making that the jail of the estate. What alliance is there between sickness and crime? None but what a wise proprietor will rather destroy than promote. At the best, there is rather too much gossiping about the hospital of a plantation. To bring the culprits thither, is to bring them to what is

* See abridgment of evidence before the House of Commons, 1789, pages 91, 121.

sometimes a scene of amusement. Whether they are more likely to be reformed there, or to corrupt others, any man may judge.

No punishment of any consequence ought ever to take place without a formal trial, and proof of the facts. Such proceedings have a powerful effect in establishing a master's authority over the minds of his negroes. Delinquents among them would often rather undergo a summary flogging than encounter such a scene of solemnity, shame, and public conviction, followed by the united condemnation of the whole gang. Even in the slightest cases, whatever is inflicted, should be preceded by more or less of calm explanation.

Fines are an excellent sort of punishment—they are felt very keenly by negroes. Some judicious planters adopt an exceeding good plan of making the forgiveness of a delinquent depend on his being able to find a neighbour who shall be security for his future good conduct.

So much for the topic of punishments. But is the management of a body of negroes to be a mere system of terror? Every rational and humane colonist will abjure this detestable but

too prevailing idea. Such a man knows that *to rule by fear only, is to possess no more than half rule*. Along with that principle, he will avail himself of those other motives and feelings of which our negroes are not a whit less susceptible than ourselves. To this end he will establish a judicious system of *rewards*: these are a most powerful instrument of management. Each of them acts doubly. The undeserving who are denied them, are operated upon at the same moment, as the deserving who are distinguished by them—thus, they are the means of increasing the variety of punishments, negatively, indeed, but very effectively; and the more so, that it is the mind, not the body, which receives the sting. The small expence (for it really may be contrived to be very moderate) an attentive planter will find more than made up by the accession of willing labour, and the saving of all that loss of work which necessarily follows severe punishments with that horrid instrument, the whip.

5. The above observations lead us to the subject of General Treatment. As the foundation of all improvement in the management of negroes, there is a natural rule which always

occurs to the mind, but it is one of which the plain mention is very apt to give offence, viz. to recollect constantly that they are human beings. It may, perhaps, be asked, who does not do this? It is easy to put such a question, but most undoubtedly it is by no means common to carry into all the details of plantership a lively and unremitting impression on the mind—a practical impression, entering into the business of every hour, that the people in our hands are really persons of the same nature, passions, and feelings, in every respect as ourselves. If this is not done, a fundamental mistake is committed in plantership, a mistake which must prove as fatal to pecuniary success (if I may treat the subject mechanically), as it would be in a man whose profession is that of a breeder of any of the lower tribes of animals, to apply to them the management and regimen which belong to a totally different tribe. The mistake has been committed however, and that, alas, very long and very generally.

Let it be an invariable rule with us to give a patient hearing to all the complaints of our negroes. This is often sufficiently tiresome;

but if we are to manage them smoothly and happily for ourselves as well as for them, we shall be willing to make the sacrifice. And there are no people more capable of being fairly reasoned with; none can be made more sensible of right and wrong. Let us take an interest in all their little concerns—be ready always to heal their quarrels, and give them our advice, with the affability which will induce them to follow it. Let us convince them that we wish to see them comfortable and thriving—that the abundance of their live stock, their furniture, their cloaths, their money, gives us pleasure. Let us remember, that the more we raise in their minds a love of comfort, and a sense of property, the more we incite them to habits of industry, possess ourselves of their private attachment, and secure the public tranquillity of the colony. In short, let us treat them as rational beings, let us not hesitate to do every thing in our power to elevate their character; and since we cannot make them any thing else than men, let us make them feel that they are men. Why should not a deserving negro have a kind look from his master, and a few words of affable

conversation?—They are a great encouragement to him, and a stimulus to others, to deserve a similar distinction. A planter, who thoroughly knows his negroes, can manage them very much by his mere manner towards them ; he can, as it were, increase his variety of punishments and rewards by the apparent trifle of the withholding of his countenance, or bestowing of his smiles. I have had the happiness of knowing proprietors, whom it was a pleasure to see among their negroes. I am sorry to say, I could hardly ever say the same thing of managers ; with them the dignity of office consists too much in indiscriminate haughtiness, and the unrelaxing tone of command. With them also there is, generally speaking, too little system in what may be called the criminal jurisprudence of a plantation, too constant recourse to one remedy for wrong on all occasions, flogging, flogging, flogging. The coarse and convenient order is easily given, and few of them will take the trouble necessary for managing negroes otherwise. This is a point which ought to be in a very particular manner pressed upon their attention by their superiors. A system of improved

treatment, when regularly established, and impartially persevered in, commands the respect, obedience, and attachment of a gang of negroes beyond what can be believed by persons who have never tried the experiment. Nor is it possible, till a very material alteration takes place in the prevailing practice, to hope for improvement in the minds of our slaves. The constant indecent exposure of the persons of men and women is itself a wretched degradation. How can we raise the character of our negroes, as long as the ordinary punishment we have for them is that of brutes?

Before concluding this article, let me just observe that it is an excellent plan, respecting the disputes which arise among the negroes themselves, to have them settled by juries chosen from among their own number; the master presiding as judge. His authority, and their submission and attachment, are rivetted by means of every occasion on which he dispenses justice:—not to mention that an intelligent master thus gains continual new insight into all that passes in his negro houses.

6. It will have been seen that the most of

my past observations apply to plantation slaves, rather than to those who live in the towns of the West Indies. The latter require some separate notice, for the difference between the two states is very great. It is a difference in many respects in favour of the former class; which is a fortunate circumstance, that class being by far the more numerous. The management of a well-ordered plantation is the direction of a regular machine; and its discipline, like that of a regiment on duty, is susceptible of more system, and consequently of more ease, both to the ruled and the ruling party, than can prevail in the case of a disbanded population, whose employments are desultory. Even when the master is of the most humane disposition, he feels himself often at a loss how to avoid frequent punishments in managing careless and refractory domestic slaves. It is no wonder, therefore, that men of a different character often become perfect tyrants. The world has long said that no despot is so great within his circle as he whose circle is small; and accordingly there are, perhaps, no slaves in the West Indies so miserable as those who in small num-

bers of two or three, half-a-dozen or a dozen, are the property of the lower classes of whites, or of the people of colour in the towns.

I know no radical or general improvement that can be suggested with any hope of success in favour of these poor negroes, except a relaxation of the laws relating to evidence against masters, and whites in general. In no part of the British West Indies is negro evidence, however strengthened by numbers or by circumstances, available in criminal cases against a white man. This subject I know is tender ground to enter on. I will therefore refer to sentiments delivered upon it by higher authority than my own.

In the year 1811, Parliament required, from the different governors of the colonies, reports on certain heads of inquiry: and by an order of the House of Commons of the 12th July 1815, these were printed under the title of "Papers relating to the West Indies." One of the demands was an account of returns made in pursuance of any laws existing for the protection of slaves; and another was a list of any convictions of free persons, white or coloured, who

had offended against any such laws. Sir William Young, the governor of Tobago, and an experienced and extensive proprietor in the colonies, makes the following among other observations on these subjects. "There appears to me a radical defect in the administration of justice throughout the West Indies, in whatever case the wrongs done to a slave are under consideration; or rather that justice cannot in truth be administered, controled as it is by a law of evidence which covers the most guilty European with impunity, provided that when having criminal intent, he is cautious not to commit the crime in the presence of a *free witness*."—"An enumeration of humane laws for the protection of slaves," he adds, "all rendered nugatory by the conditions of evidence required in the administration, would be an idle enlarging of the report. What is wanted is to render the law efficient, and this I think can only be done by a *qualified admission of the evidence of slaves*."—"I am aware," he proceeds, "of the strong prejudices entertained throughout the West Indies against the admission of the evidence of slaves, when a white man is on trial or concerned. I am aware

that the creole planter will object that his life, however innocent, is not safe, if one or more vindictive slaves may assert him to be guilty, and be believed in a court of justice. I am aware of the common-place objections to the admitting the evidence of a slave, that he has no sense of religion, and has no feeling of the moral obligation of an oath. But has he no feeling of what is true and what is not?"—"I may surely assume, that even in the planters' opinion the evidence of a slave is to be taken and believed in the case of trial of a slave. On what principle is it then wholly rejected on trial of a free person? But to relieve the fears of the over-suspicious planter, I would shew him that his conviction may not be the result of the trial. In the administration of British justice, the distinction is taken of *competency* and of *credibility* of evidence. I would avail myself, in the first instance, of this distinction, and admit the slave to be a *competent* witness; further requiring, to make him a *credible* witness, a corroborative testimony by others, or from circumstances. In the opinion which I have long held, that the evidence of a slave, so at the outset qualified,

may safely, and usefully to purposes of justice, be admitted in the criminal courts of the colonies, when a free person is on trial, I have been strongly confirmed by Mr. Elphinstone Piggot, who has for many years presided as chief justice in this island. From the more enlightened minds and better habits of the negroes, as appears to me improving from year to year, I doubt not that the evidence of slaves, first taken as competent, but of value only as corroborated, will in process, and at no distant period, be received, in instances of known and good negroes' characters, as of itself credible evidence."*

Sentiments so liberal do honour to the memory of this departed West Indian, as they do to the eminent colonial judge whom he names. I would humbly ground on them a proposition that the experiment be begun with the *towns* of our colonies. If West Indian legislatures will not consent to extend to the plantations this innovation on the law, still they must admit that as, on the one hand, the situation of the negroes in the towns is often more clamant, so on the other, the danger of

* Papers relating to the West Indies, p. 181, 183.

abuse is less visible. From the close neighbourhood of inhabitants, corroborative or explanatory circumstances will be always likely to be known, and safe to be trusted to, as indicative of the real facts of every case as they shall arise.*

* It were truly desirable that the Legislatures would grant the boon to both town and country; applying Sir W. Young's rule of degrees of credibility: for till something of this kind is done, all other *legal* regulations in favour of negroes seem, in a great degree, useless. If ever an attempt of the kind promised fair, it was the well-known Guardian Act of Grenada, passed in the year 1797. It is still kept in existence nominally, for benefitting the slaves by various humane provisions, "and for constituting and appointing guardians to effectuate and carry into execution the regulations and purposes of this act." These guardians, chosen annually, are bound to diligence by a solemn oath; they are required to visit the estates once in six months, "to hear and inquire into the complaints, and inquire into and inspect the grounds, clothing, lodging, maintenance, and treatment of the slaves;" and they are empowered to examine, on oath, the white persons concerned. All this looks most beautiful on paper—but among the governors' reports there is a dash of a pen, which throws a fatal blot on the whole. President Adye writes respecting the act, to the Secretary of State, in February 1812, "I think I may venture to say it is, in most respects, a dead letter."

The whole of the passage in the president's letter runs as follows:—it is in reply to the queries of parliament relative to

It is impossible to quit this very important topic without remarking, how strongly it bears on every point relating to the improvement of the mind of the negro. That he has "no sense of religion, and no feeling of the moral obligation of an oath," is, if true, the strongest

the convictions of free persons. "Under the act, Guardians are duly appointed every year, but few instances have occurred of their having acted further than the taking of the oath prescribed by it; no convictions however have ever been had, no forfeitures or penalties recovered, or punishment imposed or adjudged for defaults, in this or any other respect, nor for any delinquency whatever, contrary to the directions of this act; and I think I may venture to say, it is in most respects a dead letter: I do not however mean to insinuate, that severity of punishment, or ill treatment of slaves, is common in Grenada. There are indeed some few instances of common law indictments, both against whites and free coloured persons, preferred by the law officers of the crown, but no convictions have ensued." Papers, &c. p. 147.

One great benefit of the Guardian Act was, its tendency to diminish the evil we have just been treating of—the want of evidence against free delinquents. Had the duties of guardians been fulfilled in the above cases (in which it is not to be supposed that the law officers of the crown proceeded without grounds), the universal result, failure of conviction, would not probably have been to be recorded. But it is too plain, that the state of the negro in Grenada is left as entirely to the good or bad dispo-

reflection which the master can bring against his own neglect of duty to his heathen servant.

7. The superstitions of our negroes next present themselves to our consideration, especially the far-famed one of Obeah.

No mistake is more common, and yet more sition of the master, as if the enactments made in his favour did not exist. Whether this is not to be regretted, any man may judge who reads the preamble of the act—it may be epitomized as follows: “Whereas humanity and the interest of the colony require regulations for rendering the servitude of slaves as easy as possible, and promoting the natural increase of their population; by compelling masters properly to lodge, feed, clothe, and maintain them; prescribing reasonable bounds to power; introducing them to the knowledge of the Christian religion, and affording them opportunity of improving in morality; and by constituting a proper tribunal of guardianship for the redress of their grievances and security of their rights hereby granted,” &c.

That in such matters the laws are a dead letter, is an evil not confined to Grenada—it is a mournful characteristic of the West Indies in general. From the present and other instances of it, three practical inferences may be deduced. 1. Colonial laws are not sufficient for the occasion—a change of habits and feelings is wanted throughout the communities, and would be wanted even if negro testimony were received as evidence, that it might be allowed its due weight either as competent or credible. 2. Laws, nevertheless, are not useless: they are an acknowledg-

gross and palpable than treating Obeah as an evil to be cured by corporal punishment. This is, in fact, reviving all the exploded doctrines of persecution for religious opinion, and it is invariably followed by the same effects which have attended persecution in all ages ; the opinion, false or true, has been confirmed and spread by it. If African witchcraft had not thus been carefully kept alive in the colonies, it would long ago, like European witchcraft, have died a natural death. One would think that experience had by this time satisfied the intelligent part of mankind, that what *lodges in the mind* cannot be *driven out of the body* ; but among West Indians there are men slow of learning. It may be true, indeed, that poison is sometimes used by the Obeah man. When such a fact can be brought home to him, then let the charge of murder, whether intended or perpetrated, be separated from the fraud of his priestcraft, and let him be brought to trial for this separate crime. But it

ment of duty, a reproof of deviation, and therefore a mean of creating gradually the change required. 3. To promote both their enactment and fulfilment, British interference is the effectual, and must continue to be the active instrument.

is seldom that this can be done, at least to the satisfaction of the whole gang, which is the desirable object. The true thing, then, instead of punishing the pretended sorcerer, which is only making him a person of consequence, is to disarm him of his power. Detect his tricks, bring forth his instruments of incantation, and shew how feeble they are if not accompanied by poison. Get a few sensible negroes to assist your plan; raise the laugh against him, and you will by and by have no more Obeah. When you find that he is himself a sincere dupe to his own delusion, as is sometimes the case, use the same means of reasoning and ridicule to free him from it. Sometimes a change of scene is useful to recover the spirits of a negro who thinks himself under the conjuror's fatal spell.

8. The next object of our attention is one which has been more neglected than any other whatever;—I mean Marriage. What, marriage of negroes! methinks I hear exclaimed: who ever heard of such a thing? It is indeed too true, that it has been too little heard of: and hence our want of a thriving population. The dissolute manners of our slaves, and their habits

of night walking ;—those two sources of numberless diseases and mischiefs, have from the commencement of colonization, forbid the race of our labourers to keep up its numbers. For these evils, colonists have themselves much to blame. In the days of the slave trade few were wise enough to proportion their purchases of males and females ; and vicious customs are more easily encouraged than destroyed. Let proprietors, at last, use all the means in their power to convince their negroes of the duties of husband and wife ; and establish the impression by a marriage ceremony of some sort, however simple. Let them not be ashamed to be present at it. Let them promote virtuous connections by giving every young couple a present to set up house with. Even when the object of attachment lives on another estate, let them encourage, by every means, an honest disclosure of the circumstance, and be willing to make some sacrifices on the occasion, by transacting with the other proprietor a sale of the one slave or the other, or by making such other arrangements as a considerate master of human beings will not think it too much to direct his mind to. I

know how all this will be laughed at by some persons. I can only say, that this shews nothing, except the very great need there is of a change of sentiment among us. The practice of Roman catholic colonists puts us to shame on this subject. In so far as their good example has been followed by English West Indians, it has been in Antigua and the neighbouring islands, where Christian teachers have lived long among the slaves. In fact, the house of assembly of Antigua, in a return to Governor Elliot, of 12th March, 1812, which makes an article in the reports already referred to, expressly state, that many men and women slaves have been formally married by the Moravian missionaries.* Here, then, let us pause a moment, and ask how the population of Antigua stands? While other colonies have been sustaining diminution, the governor, after much pains, ascertained, that in this island, from the year 1807 to 1812, there was an *increase of eleven hundred and seventy slaves.*†

9. In connection with these observations

* Papers, &c. p. 144.

† Papers, &c. p. 137, 138.

stands an important matter, which I touched on before, but which you will have been expecting me to discuss more fully ; I mean Religious Instruction. The subject is, indeed, well worthy of full consideration. I shall devote my next letter to an examination of the effects which have followed Christianity in the experience of those colonies, where it has been introduced among the negroes. Let me at present, in this view, entreat of West India gentlemen, that instead of raising a clamour quite unworthy of their respectability, and echoing a cry of fanaticism, and other sounds to which no distinct idea can be attached, they would calmly and dispassionately consider the great subject of imparting this blessing to their slaves. How is it that, with the exception of the Danes, protestant nations have so entirely dismissed from their minds, all idea of their owing such a duty to the multitudes of human beings whose lives were devoted to their service ? Roman catholics have not been thus guilty. In those islands which we received from France, as Grenada, for instance, the custom of singing hymns at night was so thoroughly

established among the negroes on the plantations, when our government began, that it is more or less continued to this day; while the mongrel French, in which this act of devotion is carried on, is a standing memorial to us, if any were necessary, how little we have to claim for ourselves respecting the establishment of the practice. But in the colonies which have continued Roman catholic, we are still more put to shame. Among the reports made to government, that from Martinique contains the following words from General Wale :—" The churches are equally free of access to the slaves as to the free people ; and in addition to the usual service, extra mass is performed in the large towns for the convenience of such slaves as come to market on a Sunday, from a distance in the country."* Where is the British colony where similar attention has ever been paid to the enslaved population, and where the white inhabitants have been thus willing to worship along with them ?

A popular writer on the West Indian side of

* Papers, &c. p. 153.

the question* tells us, with a great deal of triumph, that churches according to the establishment of the church of England are maintained, not only in every British colony, but in the different parishes of each colony. Here, as in other instances, this gentleman is so carried away by his argument, as really to forget himself. What he says does not hold true, with respect to a single one of those islands which were ceded to us by the peace of 1763, and have since been known under the name of the New Islands; so that of half our Antilles, it could not have been said at any time during the last half-century! Accordingly, nothing more is necessary to overthrow his unguarded assertion, than to refer to his own quotations from the Governor's Reports, in which (though he omits to make any acknowledgment of the correction) he is compelled to unsay what he had said respecting those islands.† Even as to the others, he is compelled to state, that in many cases different parishes are united under one cure.

* Mr. Marryat. Thoughts, &c. p. 142, second edition.

† Dominica, St. Vincent, Tobago, Grenada, and the Grenadines.

In regard to what remains,—yes, if it will do the poor people any good, the negroes may, in those colonies, look at the outside of the walls so pompously spoke of; as they may also, in the New Islands, contemplate the exterior of one hall or room, which generally serves as the single church of the whole colony. But, as to the *worshippers*, in either case, will this writer say, that the slaves among them exceed in number the Africans you may often see in a congregation in London? Or will he affirm that those places of worship, small as they are, are on stated occasions opened for the negroes alone? The fact is, the English established clergy of the West Indies do not, in general, look on those numerous people as a part of their cure of souls. With the exception of a very few (who must, though in regular orders, be content to take the consequences of their zeal, and be ranked among the Methodists and fanatics of the day), these gentlemen are so far from taking a charge of this sort, that there is no imputation whatever that would so highly affront many of them, as being supposed “negro parsons.” I should be glad to

think that the appellation is to become more honourable, in consequence of the incorporation of the Society founded by the late excellent Bishop Porteus "for the conversion of Negro Slaves." But, even as to that recent Society, what are its operations? Two ministers are in the whole British West Indies! What was its endowment? The bequest of a single European philanthropist* of a former age! In short, if we put out of view what has been done, in the midst of contempt and discouragement, sometimes of persecution, by those benevolent sectarian teachers, whom our colonists in general, and especially those of Jamaica, the colony at the head of all, are to this hour opposing and reviling (I speak with the exceptions which will afterwards most honourably appear)—if we put this out of view, there is not, and there never was, either worship or instruction of any kind provided by British planters for their numerous slaves. It is impossible to contemplate this fact, and the opposition which so unhappily distinguishes itself at the present day, combined with the low state of morals which the West Indies

* Mr. Boyle.

have always exhibited, without thinking with awe of a similar picture of an ancient age, held forth to us by high authority :—" Ye enter not into the kingdom of heaven yourselves, and those who would enter in ye hinder." God grant that my countrymen may at last bethink themselves, and avert the application of the denunciation with which the solemn words are accompanied in the sacred record !

LETTER V.

ON THE PROVED EFFECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION OF NEGRO SLAVES.

I PROPOSE to inquire into the results of Christianity among negroes, in the West Indies, where it has been imparted to them ; and, where they have been neglected, into the circumstances of the neglect.

My facts will be taken from official documents. In referring to these I shall take the liberty of interspersing remarks, which it is impossible to avoid making on this interesting subject.

I shall begin with extracts from the evidence given before the House of Commons, on the question of the slave trade, in 1789, by witnesses called *against* the abolition ; witnesses, therefore, peculiarly free from objection on the part of West Indians.

[See the printed Abridgment, No. I.]

Sir Ashton Warner Byam, H. M. Attorney-General for Grenada, &c.

P. 52.—“The only efforts to instruct the slaves worth mentioning, as far as he saw, were those of the Moravians in Antigua; but he did not live there, and only learnt from those who did, that they thought the Moravians had considerably improved the slaves.”

Alexander Campbell, Esq.

P. 62.—“He thinks the French slaves considerably better disposed than the English; they are not such thieves. Being mostly Christians, they have better ideas of right and wrong. Every evening out of crop, and on Sunday evenings in crop, they meet of their own accord, and pray and sing hymns with fervency and devotion. The Grenada negroes are equally devout.”

This gentleman's statements are supported by the other evidence as to the above facts.

The same witness.

P. 63.—“In Grenada all the creoles, and most new negroes, are Christians, being generally christened two or three years after their arrival. They often read the service over their dead; they often attend the churches, English and catholic. The clergy, by law, must christen them gratis, and certain times yearly visit and instruct them. Believes the negroes in the other ceded islands are equally religious, though there is no such law.”

The spirit of sanguine representation which breathes in the last sentence of this article warns us to listen to the whole with some qualification. Two of the ceded islands were St. Vincent and Dominica, where the next witness says the negroes were shamefully neglected as to religion:—an assertion more agreeable to the facts generally known to West Indians. In so far as the picture of Grenada is not overcoloured, it exhibits the effects and remains of Roman Catholic zeal. I am sorry to say that I believe there is now not very much visiting, instructing, or christening. I have good authority for as-

serting that since the English possessed the island every sort of Christian observance has been progressively declining among the negroes. There may be exceptions of particular estates, but I speak generally of the colony.

James Baillie, Esq.

P. 79.—“The Danish government have given every possible encouragement to the introducing the Christian religion among their slaves; and if the government of Great Britain were to pay more attention to the instruction of slaves, their morals might be very much improved, and it might in the end prove a *greater security to the welfare of the West India islands than people in general are aware of.*”—“In Grenada the slaves found there on its cession, were all baptized, and continue in the practice of the Roman Catholic religion: and it has an exceeding good effect on their morals. In the old English islands, and in St. Vincent and Dominica, the negroes are shamefully neglected as to religion.”

T. N. Kirby, Esq. Antigua.

P. 118.—“The Moravian and Methodist

preachers have applied themselves very zealously and successfully in the conversion of negroes in Antigua, and having built proper meeting houses, all the slaves are encouraged by their masters to attend. The general effect on the converts has been a more decent behaviour and religious attendance, and most are become Christians. Before the Moravians and Methodists came to the island the negroes very generally attended all the churches, and they considered themselves as influenced to pursue the doctrine they heard: but from their having had greater attention paid them by the Moravians and Methodists, he thinks they are much more enlightened than they were."

The expressions used by different witnesses require some comparison to obtain a correct result. It is difficult to understand what sort of thing it was which this gentleman called a general attendance of the negroes at all the churches previous to the appearance of the Moravians and Methodists. The two succeeding witnesses make a report rather different in this particular, and certainly more agreeable to the general state of the British West Indies.

Dr. Samuel Astbill, Antigua.

P. 127.—“ Formerly he believes the slaves thought little of religion, and few were Christians; many now attend churches and meetings, and most are baptized, from the settling of Moravian and Methodist teachers in the island; the former have two good chapels, are attentive to their duty, and lead exemplary lives.”

Alev. Willock, Esq. Antigua.

P. 133.—“ The slaves are better used; their *good conduct deserves it*, as they are much more civilized, and often go to church and methodist meetings on Sunday. Has heard the slaves *instructed at methodist meetings to be attentive and obedient to their masters*, with other good advice; never knew the regular clergy pay any particular attention to them.”

The following quotations are from the Report of the Privy Council on the same occasion of the question of the Slave Trade.

Part 3d.—Barbadoes.—Evidence of the Agent.

“ Great advantages to the interests of the planters, have arisen from the labours of the

Moravian missionaries in the island of Antigua.”

Part 3d. Antigua.—Answers from Planters whose negroes had been converted by the Moravian missionaries :—

Mr. Entwistle.—“ After a residence in the West Indies for more than thirty years, and from having had under my care and direction upwards of 2000 slaves for full 20 years of that time, I will venture to pronounce that the slaves in general have improved in their morals, and in their behaviour, by the example and by the precepts of those missionaries, I have encouraged those missionaries so far as to allow three places of meeting on the different plantations under my care.”

Mr. Gordon.—“ My opinion perfectly coincides with Mr. Entwistle.”

I now come to the “ Papers relating to the West Indies,” presented to Parliament as formerly mentioned. Among the heads of inquiry stood several questions respecting the means of worship and instruction existing among the different classes of inhabitants of the co-

lonies. The reports of the Governors in reply are accompanied with the parochial returns whereon they are founded.

Barbadoes.—Sir George Beckwith says,

“ The island is divided into eleven parishes, in each of which there is a resident rector.”

Parish of St. Michael.

Baptisms of slaves in one year, 270. This parish, by far the most populous in the island, includes the capital town of Bridgetown.

Parish of St. Philip.—The following statement is made by the Rector.

“ Many adults and infants are yearly admitted to the rites of baptism. All of this class in society, have likewise free access to the other services and solemnities of the church.”

It would have been desirable that some further particulars had been given respecting this distinguished parish, but even of the baptisms no number is stated. Does the “ free access ” fill the church with successive congregations of negroes ? Or does private instruction go on in the parish ?

There are nine other parishes from which none of the returns mention the baptism of a single negro. One rector writes to the governor, "With regard to this class of the inhabitants, I take leave to assure your excellency that I have ever evinced a readiness to co-operate with the gentlemen of the parish in any plan for their religious instruction; and that to the few who frequent my church (where commodious seats are provided for all who attend), every encouragement in my power is afforded."

Another says, "During the short period of my ministry, your excellency may be assured I have anxiously availed myself of every opportunity of conveying religious instruction to the slaves within my parish; and the devout behaviour of those I have already prevailed upon to attend divine service, induces me to form an humble hope that my future labours for their improvement will not be totally devoid of success."

I am very desirous to give credit to these clergymen, as impressed with a sense of their duty, and am therefore compelled to take credit

proportionably from the gentlemen of the parishes as not evincing similar "readiness to co-operate," and not permitting "available opportunities;" for as to the negroes themselves, how should they be more averse to instruction in Barbadoes than in other colonies? The returns from eight parishes take no notice whatever of the religious state of the slaves; had they been all cattle the silence could not have been more complete. Except a statement of the proceedings on two plantations under the will of the founder of Codrington College, the above is the whole account of what is done in the way of religious instruction under the church establishment, for nearly 70,000 slaves, by about 16,000 white inhabitants, in a small island where there are eleven parish churches with resident clergymen, and which has called itself a Christian and an English country for the greater part of two centuries. The Moravian mission to the negroes has only 221 members, and the Methodist, 30. The latter missionary complains that "deep rooted prejudice impedes the progress of the mission."*

* Papers, &c. p. 2 to 23.

Where there is so little instruction, it cannot be expected that I should have any effects of it to produce. But does *non-instruction* also have effects? Are any of these sufficiently palpable for West Indians to perceive them? The insurrection which broke out lately was no new event in the history of an island where the paganism of Africa has so generally and so long reigned undisturbed by any thing except the vices of Europe.

Dominica.—Gov. Barnes.

“The majority of inhabitants in this island being French, the Roman Catholic is consequently the prevalent religion; and although no particular pains are taken by the priest to instruct the negroes, still more religion exists among the French than English negroes. This arises not only from the French proprietors being for the most part resident on their estates, but the very great neglect of the established church. There has been no protestant church in the island for very many years; and previously to my taking charge of the government, there had been no clergyman resident for a

considerable time. The latter difficulty has been removed; and it is but justice to the House of Assembly to say, that they have made a liberal provision for the present rector of St. George, the Rev. Mr. Newman: but I fear it will be some time longer before the church will be built, as *ten years* have now elapsed since an act passed the legislature for this purpose, and the *foundation stone has not yet been laid*. There is no law obliging the clergyman to visit the estates, but the Rev. Mr. Newman most cheerfully attends when requested; and in one visit to some of the distant estates a few months ago, he baptized upwards of 200 negro children and adults; on which occasion, for the purpose of giving every countenance and encouragement to the propagation of Christianity among the negroes, I attended myself.”*

It is most earnestly to be desired that the endeavours of the governor and rector may continue, and be attended with success; for it appears too plain that the religious state of Dominica, whatever it was during the time of the French, has not improved by English occu-

* Papers, &c. p. 25.

pancy. The population of slaves is 21,728. Of this large number the English proportion, among which 200 baptisms stand recorded, is not stated. There is a letter from the Methodist missionary respecting the pecuniary support of the mission: no public colonial aid is given it; and his silence as to receiving encouragement from the planters in his labours among the negroes, must, I fear, be regarded as a confirmation of the rumours which have prevailed of a contrary tendency.

Demerara and Essequibo.—Gov. Bentinck.

“The garrison chaplain is the only clergyman of the Church of England. There is a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. There are besides two dissenting ministers here, who have two chapels, one in town, the other in the country, on the estate of a gentleman who had it built a couple of years ago. These apply themselves more particularly to the instruction of the negroes. No provision within the colony for their support. As to the restriction or regulation of the religious worship of slaves, there is none other but an act passed by the

legislature of the country, forbidding night meetings, and intended solely to prevent the negroes from being absent from the estates after the proprietors, &c. were retired to rest, which they generally do at about nine o'clock. The negroes being in no way whatever prevented from attending the places of public worship, the English clergyman performing divine service every Sunday, purposely for the coloured people in the afternoon, as the chapel is too small, &c." *

I earnestly hope the exemplary zeal of this individual English clergyman in his small chapel may never meet with such opposition, as I understand on good authority was encountered by the proprietor who gave the colony an additional place of worship at his own expense. We are told there is no regulation respecting the religious worship of the slaves, except one prescribing at what times it shall *not* be attended. To make a single regulation providing a time when it might be *in the power of a few negroes to attend*, does not seem to have occurred to the gentlemen of Demerara and Essequibo; far

* Papers, &c. p. 39, 40.

less to devise any means for making the benefit general. The united colonies stretch along a vast extent of sea, and river shore, and the number of slaves in them is upwards of 77,000. The planters very gravely assure Parliament, through the organ of their governor, that “no way whatever” has been resorted to, to *prevent* the worship of such a population, scattered over such a territory, from taking place in four small buildings, three of them together in the town. I am afraid the good people of England may be at some loss to perceive on what ground they are to give this forbearance the praise and admiration which seem expected. That the case had in it such utter impossibility as anticipated all other prevention will be more readily understood by them. No doubt however it is well that the Demerary legislature have not disgraced their statute book as some others have done.

Not to extend these extracts too much, I pass over the Bahamas and Bermudas, and limit myself to the sugar colonies. Among these too I omit Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, and Curaçoa, as having been settled by Roman Catholics, of

whom I have spoken in my last letter. I there gave a part of the report from Martinique, which would otherwise have come in among the present extracts.—From Demerara I go to the neighbouring colony,

Berbice.

“One Clergyman does duty in the Dutch language. No English churches, clergy, or teachers.”*

I have to observe, however, that since this report was made, an English clergyman has been appointed. But, as usual, this does not introduce any worship among the poor negroes. The commissioners for crown property sent out a missionary to instruct the crown slaves, and to offer his services generally throughout the colony. The offer has not been accepted. Berbice contains about 25,000 slaves.

Surinam.

Major-general Bonham mentions two considerable bodies of Jews, and I confess I think it very likely that they are fully as at-

* Papers, &c. p. 187.

tentive to their religious observances as most of their neighbours. There is a very old Moravian mission: the report says—"The Moravian brethren are eight in number, who all follow some trade. Their congregation in Paramaribo is as follows:—slaves, 347; free people, negro and coloured, 103; total, 450. They entirely maintain themselves, and do not receive any allowance from the colony." "There is only one clergyman of the church of England,"....."and one chapel."* A Dutch Reformed church is mentioned, frequented by "few people of colour or slaves," a Lutheran church, and a Roman Catholic church. The Lutherans of the colony are stated at 450 to 500, and the Roman Catholics at 291. By these numbers it appears that there must be no negroes considered as belonging to either denomination. I am sorry thus to perceive, that among the various places of worship in the town of this great colony, there is only one in which that race are recognized as worshippers—and *that* one as usual the Sectarian place. I make this remark because Surinam originally belonged to Holland, to which power

* Papers, &c. p. 99.

it has been restored by the peace, and because it is no pleasure to me to extol the characters of other nations above my own : in fact the Dutch pay no more regard to the religion of their slaves than we. Even the Roman Catholics here seem to be an exception among colonists of that persuasion ; and the Anglo-Batavian colonies of Berbice and Demerara, as we have seen, exhibit the same character. It is singular that a nation, who early distinguished itself by carrying Christianity along with it when it colonized in the East, should have adopted a different system among its own bondmen in the West. Is it that the African slave-trade expelled from the breast those feelings, which, in the case of nations already found peopling distant regions, pleaded with Europeans in their favour ; and that a traffic in the human animal, created different sentiments towards the flesh and blood which was *imported* for population ? Whatever was the cause, the lamentable fact is evident that the Moravians have not been generally encouraged by the planters of Surinam, otherwise their mission, which began as far back as the year 1738, must have spread widely

over the colony: whereas its benefits are little known, except in the town of Paramaribo, and round the settlement of Sommelsdyke. From its success in Paramaribo, it is impossible not to regret that its operations have been so limited. The first views of the brethren, indeed, were to the Indians on the upper parts of the rivers of Surinam and Berbice. Afterwards the Dutch encouraged them to evangelize the independent tribe of free negroes who live behind this colony. But the wandering life of both nations has been much against their success. Why did not the planters then solicit the church to turn their attention to the settled estates? If they had been so wise, the last named body of threatening neighbours might have been prevented from gaining new accessions of numbers. Indeed there are no transatlantic settlements where common policy would more strongly dictate the planting of Christianity, with the peace and attachment which grow with it, than in the colonies of Dutch and English Guiana. They contain upwards of 150,000 slaves, and are bounded in one quarter by the above-mentioned powerful tribe of free negroes, the descendants of those

formidable maroons who were the actors in several old rebellions, and, after a long contest, were acknowledged by treaty as an independent nation. The success of their struggle, and the boundless woods and fastnesses of South America, are temptations presented afresh every returning night to those multitudes of slaves. Yet amidst the general infatuation of colonists on the subject we are discussing, there is no opposition more determined than is maintained by the whites of those regions. The inhabitants of Surinam have long had the invaluable instrument of peace and security in their own possession :—they have not only seen, but on various occasions, I understand, have even publicly acknowledged, its happy tendency and effects, so far as its operations have gone ; yet they have not extended its use. The total number of slaves in the colony is about 52,000.

Baron Sack, a Prussian nobleman, who made a voyage to Surinam a few years ago, adds his suffrage to the general voice on the subject of instruction. Treating of the free negroes of Paramaribo, he says, “ There is a great difference between those who have been instructed in the

Christian religion by the Moravians, and the others ; and I have found by experience how much more their word may be relied on.* He makes another observation, to which I must give a place here. " The Dutch laws which were given to Surinam at the first establishment of the colony, and *by which a negro is declared to be free the moment he embraces Christianity*, have unquestionably very much checked the zeal of their masters in promoting their conversion."† I have somewhere else heard of some old law of this extraordinary nature quite unaccountable to me. But whatever it was, it must have grown obsolete ; and it must have been mentioned to the Baron by some of his friends among the Surinam planters, merely because they had no better answer to make to his European inquiries. It would have been worthy of this intelligent traveller to have applied to the Moravians for information : he would have found that by far the greater number of Christian negroes in the colony are actually slaves,

* Voyage to Surinam, London 1816, p. 114.

† Ditto, p. 142.

I return to the Extracts from the Governors' Reports,

St. Vincent.*

Mr. President Paul mentions one English clergyman. The slave population is 27,455. Not a syllable is said as to their religious provision. Two methodist missionaries are stated to be supported by their own societies, having no emolument from the colony.

Trinidad.†

Major-general Monro transmits tables of population and produce, but says nothing on the points we are treating of.

Montserrat.‡

No dissenting clergyman, and no establishment for them.

Grenada.

I do not find any thing on the subject of religion necessary to be added to what has been already said concerning this island.

* Papers, &c. p. 77. † Ditto, p. 89. ‡ Ditto, p. 145.

Tobago.*

Sir William Young gives a very ample report on all the points inquired into by parliament. I wish it were as pleasing on the subject of the diffusion of Christianity among the negroes, as it is on almost every other. The conduct of the proprietors in general to their slaves appears in a gratifying point of view. Sir William has already been before us as a planter, who evidently bestowed much thought on the amelioration of negro slavery. These things do not belong to my present subject; but I could not deny myself the pleasure of recording them: indeed I wish I had room to copy from this report some details respecting the island of Tobago. Even in the matter of religion, *attempts* at least have been made in favour of the negroes.

“Two missionaries from the United Brethren,” Sir William says, “have in three years made no progress far distant from the town of Scarbro’, nor have I perceived any visible effect of their missions. There is no church in

* Papers, &c. p. 162—186.

the island ; and there is only one regular clergyman, the Rev. Charles Newton, B. A. who officiates on Sundays in the Great Room of the Assembly, where a pulpit is erected for divine service. Mr. Newton is well attended : several negro children are brought every Sunday to christen. I am informed that on most estates there are many negroes who have been christened, and some who can repeat the Lord's Prayer, Belief, and Commandments. The creoles or negro slaves, born in Tobago, are those most docile, and who compose the proportion of negro community most open to instruction in the Christian religion." Since this report was made, the Moravian mission, I am sorry to say, has been for the present abandoned ; and a dissenter sent out from the London Missionary Society, has also withdrawn. I trust the inhabitants of Tobago will not be " weary in well-doing," but will increase for themselves, and renew for their negroes, the supplies of their religious wants.

I have reserved, as the last of the English colonies, the chief one of

Jamaica.

In population and importance, it is equal

to all the rest of the islands put together—a circumstance which, on our present subject, unhappily gives rise to no feeling but that of regret. Lieut. General Morrison expresses disappointment that the returns he sends home are “in a very imperfect and defective shape,” * as he had not been able to obtain further information from the chief magistrates of the parishes. “There are nineteen beneficed clergymen.”—“There is no provision made by the public for dissenting teachers of religion.” The slave population amounts to 319,912 *souls*, to use a European term. It must be confessed, hardly any thing appears in the returns to the governor, which seems to suppose such a denomination applicable to the people in question. One of those documents is a transcript of “the *only* ordinance made by the corporation of Kingston, *relative* to the religious worship of slaves.” It is dated 15th June 1807; and to sum up the contents in one word, it *forbids* instruction by missionaries under the severest penalties. Its language entitles it to a place among curiosities in England; but I have not

* Papers, &c. p. 103.

room to copy it, and I spare my brother colonists the disgrace they have not spared themselves. It is quite of a piece with the Act of the Legislature, which is so well known to have been refused the royal sanction at home. In the midst of this wide darkness, we meet with the sparkling of a single light, which it is a pleasing piece of justice to point out.

“ Westmoreland Parish.

One dissenting minister residing on Mesopotamia estate, the property of Joseph Foster Barham, Esq.” Except in this instance nothing appears throughout this important report but opposition on the part of the colonists, to the instruction of the negroes by missionaries, and perfect silence as to any exertion of the regular clergy. Indeed the spirit which could dictate the Ordinance and Legislative Act before alluded to, would hardly brook the “ false enthusiasm,” which could lead any minister of the gospel whatever to be extremely anxious for the conversion of a black slave: and if the late Bishop of London had himself gone out to Jamaica, guilty as he was of the crime of thinking that “ persons of colour

and negroes," as well as whites, may have "the holy scriptures expounded" to them, it is perfectly obvious that the same spirit, although it would probably have devised some other term to stigmatize the "pretended preaching," would have made the worthy prelate feel that lawn sleeves were a very necessary defence against colonial anger.

I turn from these painful scenes. The "Papers relating to the West Indies," shew us, as other documents did, that there are colonies where Christianity has been both freely and successfully admitted among our negroes; and that the consequences have been profit to the master, benefit to the bondman, and peace to both. With pleasure I begin with British islands; I only wish they were larger, and that some others were smaller;—they are all in the Antigua government.

St. Christopher's.*

Three Moravian ministers, and four methodist preachers. The number of converts is not mentioned in the report; but it is known that

* Papers, &c. p. 139.

of the two denominations together it amounts to 5000; the number of hearers, not regularly enrolled among the congregations, must be proportionably great:—the total population is not 20,000.

Nevis.*

The *President of the Council*, the Hon. T. J. Cottle, states that he had joined some other gentlemen in a subscription to support the *Methodist Mission*.

Antigua

Itself, which first set the excellent and wise example, it is hardly necessary again to name. Suffice it to say, that at the time when I write, the number of Christian slaves attending the Moravians alone is known to be 12,000, besides the Methodist congregations. How pleasing it is to read the words of the House of Assembly, and how rebuking to the anti-mission party: “Dissenters of every denomination enjoy ample toleration and protection in the exercise of their religious worship.”†

* Papers, &c. p. 133. † Ditto, p. 142.

The party I have just named, to whom in this country the Methodists are the objects of anger, affect to draw a line of distinction between the tendencies of Moravian and Methodist instruction. Let it be observed, that in the colonies where both have been admitted, and both successful, no such difference is once hinted at.

Now what has been the effect of these religious proceedings? Has it been tumult and disorder, or has it been safety and peace? The experiment is not of yesterday; its beginning was in the year 1756; its progress has been constant. What was said then in these Christian regions, when the news of the late insurrection in Barbadoes reached them?—Ardently do I wish that I could prevail on my prejudiced brethren to open their ears when their own fellow-colonists proclaim to them the experience of more than half a century!

In July, 1816, a new governor, Major-Gen. Ramsay, having arrived in Antigua, he proposed to the House of Assembly certain measures of security, as proper to be adopted, in consequence of the unhappy event just alluded to. On the 25th of that month, the House

presented an address to His Excellency, in which, after characterising as truly “ alarming and critical, the events which had recently agitated one of the neighbouring colonies,” and expressing their concurrence with the governor’s wishes, they proceed to deliver the following sentiments: “ We feel it our duty, notwithstanding, to observe to Your Excellency, that we have never hitherto had occasion to indulge any serious apprehensions in regard to the slave population of this island ; but, on the contrary, have every reason to believe that the lenity and kind treatment which they experience from their respective proprietors, leave them but little room for discontent ; and that *did any such feeling unhappily exist, the increasing influence of moral and religious principles among them would effectually prohibit any rash or desperate attempts.*” The governor’s reply is worthy of a British officer :—“ The obligations of duty are, no doubt, greatly strengthened and enforced by the sanctions of morality and religion ; and I hail with heartfelt satisfaction the progressive diffusion of their mild and benignant principles. They cannot fail, *when generally*

disseminated, to give you a strong guarantee of the obedience, fidelity, and gratitude of those under your protection and control; and no occasion shall pass unimproved by me to extend their influence, and consolidate *your security* by enlarging the circle of *their social virtues*."

I have taken these extracts from West Indian newspapers where the Address and Reply are recorded at length.

Such is the official testimony of the effects of Christian missions among negro slaves, borne by the legislature of an English island where they have existed for sixty years.*

Pleasing as this scene is, it is far outdone in the Danish colonies. It was a happy circumstance for our full information on this momentous subject, that the events of war had thrown these islands into our hands at the time

* Since this letter was written, I have learned from the best authority that the Antigua legislature have made application to the Moravian body for an additional missionary settlement. Men of Barbadoes, this has been the direct fruits in this colony of the insurrection that took place in your unhappy island! The measure was never proposed till after your calamity admonished them to use means for their continued tranquillity.

when government was making the investigations in question. The colonies are now restored to Denmark, and when an Englishman reads the following reports he can hardly believe they relate to the West Indies.

St. Thomas.—Governor Mac Lean.*

After mentioning that the established religion is the Lutheran, having a church for the clergyman appointed thereto, and for the Lutheran missionary to instruct the coloured people ; and after enumerating a Dutch reformed or presbyterian church, a Roman catholic church, and a Jewish synagogue of whites, he particularizes two establishments of Moravians: “They are administered by E. Hohe *and six* assistant missionaries with their *families*, aided by a *number of catechists, being coloured people*; they calculate the number of individuals resorting to them at 4000 persons of all classes ;—the missionaries are tradesmen, and from their general good conduct and great utility in the colony, they enjoy, since the year 1771, great privileges in the Danish dominions.”—Total

* Papers, &c. pp. 82, 83.

number of slaves in the island, except infants, 5520.

St. John.—Under the same government.*

Two Moravian settlements, administered by *four* teachers.—Total population, except infants, 2420.

Respecting the two islands, Governor Mac Lean reports, “ All the different clergymen and teachers of religion coincide in their statements that there exist *very few if any of the slaves belonging to this government who have not already attached themselves by baptism and confirmation to some of the above-mentioned religious establishments*; and that from the general disposition of the coloured people to be instructed in the principles of religion, many of them attach themselves to different establishments.”†

Santa Cruz.‡

Governor Harcourt’s report I wish I could circulate over every plantation in the British West Indies, with the clergymen’s returns

* Papers, &c. p. 84. † Ditto p. 84.

‡ Ditto p. 27.

transmitted by him.—“The principal town, Christianstadt, and its immediate vicinity, contains an English, a Danish, a Dutch, and a Roman catholic church, as also an extensive establishment of Moravians. For the further details I refer to the enclosed reports on each of the religious establishments. I cannot, however, refuse myself the particular satisfaction of drawing your lordship’s notice to a very gratifying result of one part of this enquiry, namely, that *out of 28,795 free coloured persons and slaves (the total of those descriptions in this island), 28,324 are actually initiated by baptism, or recorded as belonging to some church or religious establishment in Santa Cruz; to each of which two or more schools are also attached for the education and religious instruction of the children of those persons.*”

In the English church “there are four teachers appointed for religious instruction for the town, also four for a similar purpose in the country, and two nights in each week dedicated to the purpose. The whole of the free coloured and slaves of this congregation are placed under the inspection of twelve of the most respectable

characters that are to be found, who reconcile differences, and reprove for misconduct, &c.: which system has been established for upwards of twenty years and is found fully to answer every expectation.”*

The returns from the other clergymen contain similar pleasing details, but I have not room to transcribe them. The slaves are uniformly treated of as a part of their charge: the most laudable emulation in paying attention to the religious state of them and the coloured people seems to pervade the island. But it is of course among the Moravians, who began the good work, that we are to look for its fullest effects; because *in this parish*, if I may use the expression, there are *no other* parishioners. Their baptized adults and children, free coloured and slaves, are 8665. There are five missionaries. “A third church is now building out of their surplus funds in the centre of the island,” those in the towns “not being sufficiently capacious for their congregations.”†

Where do their revenues come from? From the labour of the hands of the missionaries.—

* Papers, &c. p. 32.

† Ditto p. 33.

And let me ask here, is there any difficulty in procuring religious mechanics in England for our colonies? None—but we allow a silly objection to the term Methodist to be a bugbear against our best interests. The Moravians are neither more nor less than the Methodists of Germany, and as such met with opposition at first. “The exemplary conduct of the Moravian missionaries,” Governor Harcourt says,* “coupled with their indefatigable industry, and most zealous exercise of all religious duties, has for many years obtained for them the especial protection and encouragement of the local government of Santa Cruz; both their precepts and their unassuming manners are admirably calculated to benefit that unfortunate class of persons of which their congregations are principally composed; and such is the power they possess over the minds of the negroes that when on serious occasions they exclude them, for a time, from their congregations, the negro considers it by far a more severe punishment than any other that can be inflicted.”

I cannot refuse myself the gratification of

* Papers, &c. p. 34.

transcribing the short letter which in foreign style gives the governor an account of the proceedings of these simple-hearted and worthy people :—

“ Saint Croix, 17th September, 1811.

“ The Evangelical United Brethren have by the grace of God, for more than 70 years, endeavoured to preach to the slaves and coloured people of Saint Croix the beatifick gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ ;—to their eternal salvation, that they through faith in him, to convert themselves from the power of sin to God, and to improve it by a Christian course of life. The Lord has blessed this invitation to them, and many have from time to time been served with the word and sacrament. We have in this island two churches for coloured people and slaves, and a third church for the same use in the middle of the island, almost finished, To attend these churches, are at present in Freidensthal, in the vicinity of Christianstadt, G. Jessen, and F. Hunerbein; and at Freidensberg, near Frederickstadt, M. Wied, and S. Kitschelt; and C. H. Nitz at Freidensfeldt,

in the middle of the island. The community of Friedenthal consist, of baptized adults and children, of 4981. The community of Friedensberg of baptized adults and children, 3684. These people are served with the preaching of gospel, and several edifying meetings every Sunday by the above-mentioned brethren ; also, with separate conferences and corrections after the words of God as well on Sundays as in the course of the week, when they can appear. They have also two meetings a week in the evenings ; and for the children are separate meetings, where they are instructed in the Christian faith. The brethren endeavour, by their manual labour and the blessing of God, to supply themselves with the necessaries of life ; and if any deficiency, are assisted from the Unity of the head congregation in Europe.

(Signed) Matthias Wied.”*

Let us enquire here again what has been the effect of all this. How have Christian Danish negroes conducted themselves since the year 1732,—those growing multitudes who now

* Papers, &c. pp. 37, 38.

form the almost entire black population of the three islands? Can Mr. Marryat and his friends inform me? If not, I will inform them. In one of the islands (St. Jan) recently before the arrival of the missionaries, a destructive revolt happened. The mission extended thither in 1736, and all has since been peace. In another, where a formidable conspiracy was formed, it was brought to light by Christian slaves. They were asked to join it by their old pagan associates, but had been better taught; they gave information, and saved the colony. In short, rebellion has been for eighty years unknown.

Jamaica, Barbadoes, St. Vincent, is this your history? The contrast is deep and sad, but not unnatural. We talk of the danger of giving our negroes religion, but we talk ignorantly;—the fact is they already have it in the most dangerous form; they have superstitions by no means favourable to our peace, and we cannot eradicate them but by means of truth: they have the religion of the injured savage, which is revenge, and we cannot soften it but by Christianity. It has been well said that man is

a religious animal, and there is no mind so untutored that the thoughts of retributive justice are foreign to it. It is vain to contend with nature; a perfect vacuum is not to be found in morals more than in physics; and if we will not give to the minds of our slaves the light of the gospel, they will remain full of their Obeah and every other darkness; if we will not teach them the true principles of order and submission, they will continue under the dominion of that ferocious repugnance which human nature always feels to restraint of every kind.

If gentlemen would as wise men study the subject they speak of, they would perceive how much they have mistaken it. If they would carefully examine the New Testament, they would find that it would be in no wise compromising the tranquillity of the colonies, or risking any subversion of the state of bondage, to permit the negroes to learn from the scriptures; aye, and to be taught to read them too. They would discover that the effects of Christian instruction, such as we have seen them, are not in the least surprising, but on the con-

trary are quite what were to be expected. The far greater number probably of the Christians of the early ages were slaves. Do we find that they were ever exhorted by the apostles to free themselves? Far from it. The utmost length to which any observation on the subject goes, is that there is no harm in accepting of freedom if a master chuses to confer it. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called: art thou called, being a servant (a slave)? Care not for it, but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather."* This is saying no more than every body says in the West Indies and every where else at this day: while numberless are the repeated passages where servants *under the yoke* are commanded to "count their own masters worthy of all honour,"†—"to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity,"‡ &c. &c. &c. These commands are all enforced too by the peculiar persuasions and arguments of the gospel, the strongest certainly that were

* 1 Cor. vii. 20, &c.

† 1 Tim. vi. 1, &c.

‡ Tit. ii. 9, &c.

ever presented to the mind of man. Nay the apostle of the Gentiles, the first missionary sent to all the lands of bondage throughout the world, has left on record the strongest possible proof how completely the tendency of the scriptures is mistaken on this subject. In Rome he met with a slave who had run away from his master, and the man became a convert to Christianity. What does the apostle do? Does he speak against slavery, and tell him there is no occasion for his continuing longer in that state? No, he sends him back a long journey to surrender himself to his owner, to entreat his forgiveness, and to enter again voluntarily into his bond service. In his beautiful and apostolic letter to the master, he expressly acknowledges the right of property held over the slave, and generously engages to repay, if demanded, whatever this once unfaithful servant might have pilfered.*

The fact is that Christianity never interferes in any manner with the civil affairs of life. It gives no opinion upon them; as it finds them, so it leaves them in all cases. Its occupation

* Epistle to Philemon.

is nobler, its aims are higher. Its endeavour is to turn the eyes of all men, rich and poor, bond and free, away from circumstances which it uniformly treats as of little comparative importance, and to direct the views of one and all of them to an eternal inheritance. For this purpose the duties of all stations are taught in its doctrines, and none more clearly and expressly than the contentment and cheerful submission, the service, the obedience, and perfect fidelity of Christian slaves. According to its rules, prayer for the master enters into all their acts of devotion; and surely nothing can be conceived more productive of union of heart to his service, than sincere supplications that the blessings of heaven may descend on him. Indeed Christianity teaches them gratitude to God, for a lot in which his providence separates them from heathen connections, and opens up to them the vast future blessings which the gospel unfolds. Thus it is that religion, when free from those frauds and crimes with which the corruption of man has sometimes unhappily obscured it, but which its real nature is as far from creating as it is from the tendency of the

sun to produce midnight darkness—thus it is that the true religion which came down from heaven under the name of Christianity is fitted for all states and conditions of mankind, and proves itself in all circumstances, climates, and regions, the best gift a gracious Creator ever bestowed on his rational creature. Without attempting the least change on his outward circumstances, wheresoever and howsoever it finds man, it makes him a better and a happier being than he was before. Nor can any thing else do this so thoroughly and universally. Philosophy has been tried by the learned; force has been tried by the powerful—the “still small voice” remains, and it is the one thing which will reclaim and humanize and bless mankind. Whenever without art or secular scheme it is simply made known by honest men however unlearned or despised, its character and effects universally are “peace and good will to men.” Every part of the old world has at one time or another experienced this. Many portions of the West Indies have done so, and the rest of our colonies may enjoy the same happiness if they do not persist in preferring

danger and misery. All other amelioration of the state of negroes sinks to nothing in comparison of this ; it enhances and comprizes every other improvement. It sweetens the state of bondage itself ; it produces contentment with every thing provided under it ; it incites to willing labour and faithful conduct ; it supersedes painful discipline ; it tends to elevate the character, to destroy the ignorance and superstition, and totally to eradicate the vices of our slaves. Indeed Christianity is peculiarly fitted for the black population of the West Indies. In our own country many circumstances combine to hide from all but acute observers, the excellent effects it produces among those of our people who truly receive it. But when it enters the uncultivated and untutored bosom, it so enlightens and tames it, that the effect is striking both to the man himself and to all around him. From a savage he becomes a tractable being ; if in bondage, an attached servant. A body of such negroes, in short, according to what the Danish government have said of their *sectarian* slaves for nearly a century, is a better defence to the master and

the colony than a line of fortification could possibly be.

After the details we have gone into, it is hardly necessary to say a word on the effect which such improvements would have on the amount of our black population. I know it has been said that the insalubrity of the West Indies will, in whatever circumstances, prevent the native increase or even maintenance of numbers. But this was the argument of a day, and that day has long gone by. Since the abolition no man holds such language. Let there be comfortable abundance of the necessaries of life; let there be happiness, united with such moral habits as shall promote health and vigorous spirits; let there be peace of mind, ease of body, and security of circumstances, and nature will be true to herself—a thriving population will soon shew that the West Indies are under the same law which has prevailed in all countries and through all ages of mankind. Then, if ever, will begin and advance steadily the prosperity of the British colonies.

LETTER VI.

ON THE STATE OF THE NEGROES, COLOURED PEOPLE, AND WHITES.

My fourth and fifth letters were long; yet the subjects are so important that I could almost request you to return to the former and give it another reading. Instead of this I will take the liberty of bringing again before you my ideas, not in the way of repetition but epitome. Permit me to do so by putting them into the form of a short conversation, which I shall suppose to be carried on in one of our colonies between a planter of my views and one of his neighbours.

“I know not,” says the neighbour, “how far you intend to carry philanthropy. No doubt humanity to our negroes is necessary, and you know very well I practise it. But I

am not ashamed to say that my object is to make money;—the good people of England have every one of them the same view there; and certainly, as soon as I succeed, I shall bid adieu to the West Indies.”

“ I shall be as frank as yourself,” replies the planter, “ in avowing that if I did not expect to be richer at the end of my plantership than I was at the beginning, I should drop it; and were I to meet with final disappointment, I should probably feel it as keenly as you. But my maxim is, if you will forgive its paradoxical appearance, to advance my fortune by not placing this object before me as my immediate pursuit, but rather as an object somewhat remote.”

“ I shall be very glad to know, sir, what you make your immediate object ?”

“ I shall answer you in three words:—It is to govern a community of men, women, and children. I have a large gang of slaves, and you know they are in as good subordination as any negroes in the colony. To keep them so, and at the same time improve their condition, is the favourite object of my life. To this end my

constant views are to convert their labour as much as possible into the industry of rational beings; to make their servitude a submission to known laws, established, and when necessary, enforced, for the mutual benefit of myself and them; to raise their character, increase their comforts, and receive the services of them and their children, as the result of interest and attachment. I have even higher views in their favour: I would have them Christians, and that, too, I may add, as the best means of even advancing my other plans:—but perhaps I have said enough.”

“ I really think you have; I have only to observe, I do not neglect my negroes.”

“ I do not charge you with what is called neglecting them; but in two words, the difference between your system and mine is this: In yours the prominent features every moment are the land and its produce. Your thoughts, your conversation, your hourly pursuits, are given first to them; then the cultivators are taken into view as often as occasions arise, on which they must necessarily be so. In my system this necessity is not waited for—the great

matter is always the state of the cultivators : and the next objects, which I by no means neglect, are the employment of the people and the fruits which that employment is to yield to me."

"What do you expect your creditors to say to such notions and proceedings?"

"I have explained to them amply my ideas, and stated plainly that I demand sufficient time to act fully on them. I am confident that I shall thus best secure both my creditors and myself; for I shall have an increasing population of virtuous, healthy, and orderly families rising up to labour for me. I do expect thus to arrive finally, though indirectly, at greater pecuniary gain, than if an eager making of money were the immediate object of each day's pursuit, from sun rise to sun set. In short, my maxim is, Take care of your negroes, and your fortune will take care of itself."

"What, then, are you always among your negro houses?"

"I confess I visit my people a good deal; not that all of them are fond of my doing so: the bad subjects would rather be excused, but

for that very reason I find it my interest to look after them. These, however, are few; the greater number are truly happy to receive me, though I generally drop in unexpectedly, and at all hours. We talk about their little affairs; I give them my assistance and counsel; and they usually are thankful and complying. If you tell me that I myself profit by my attention to them, you will say no more than is true. Many a disease I check in its commencement—many a quarrel which would end in bruises, or Obeah, I heal;—many a separation between man and wife I prevent. No insufficiency in inclosures for pigs and goats, admits of nightly depredations among my cane fields;—no neglect of chinks or flaws in negro houses becomes the occasion either of rheumatisms or of expensive repairs. As the people discover that the most industrious and thriving among them receive the greatest encouragement from me, there is no temptation to conceal their acquisitions, so that I know pretty correctly what property each of them possesses. All their characters are familiar to me, as well as the names of most of their acquaintance on other estates: and I think

if any public disturbance were threatened in any part of the colony, I should be aware of it as soon as most people, and without the means of either terror or torture. In all this, and our jury trials, &c. I feel no drudgery; for if you will not laugh at me, I like my negroes, and I can say, that in return I have experienced their attachment to me. I speak not without exception, but generally."

"I sha'n't laugh at your notable schoolmastership: but I must be permitted to ask you, if you don't find it often interfere with important business?"

"What business? Do you perceive that either my fields or my buildings look worse than those of my neighbours? My books are kept by people whom I pay for the purpose; and if I even found it necessary to manage my correspondence by the hands of another person, which however is not the case, and I am sure never will be, I could find such a person for money: but where is the hireling who would be a father to my gang of negroes?"

"Well, when your plan becomes general, as it is no doubt your desire to see it, it will at

least furnish new topics of conversation. I think I hear a party of gentlemen at dinner talking of nothing but their slaves, the slaves' children, and the children's chickens ; it will be vastly pretty !”

“In answer to your pleasantry, I ask you gravely, If it is not a very remarkable and striking thing how seldom the important subject of population attracts the discussion of a meeting of planters. This is of little consequence, except as conversation is an index of the thoughts, and thoughts are the source of conduct. For my part I am quite ready to meet all the ridicule that may be thrown on the broadest statement of the doctrine that when West Indians shall be heard, asking each other, not how many hogsheads of sugar such an estate makes, but how many young families of negroes are reared on it ; when the ideas of planters have undergone such a revolution as this, and a very great one, I agree with you it will be ; then, and not till then, will prosperity dawn generally on the colonies.”

From the part which my planter sustains in this dialogue, it will appear plain that he does

not leave the government of his negroes to managers and overseers. Those persons never will fulfil the part of a proprietor : indeed it would be too much to expect this even from attorneys. Hence the great disadvantage under which negroes must always labour, whose owner is an absentee. Yet if attention to negroes were to become *the fashion*; if the subject consequently were always to fill a part of every letter from the proprietor, we might see great changes in this respect. An attorney who enters into the spirit of the charge he undertakes, may do some degree of justice to his absent constituent, if he has not above one or two estates to look after besides his own, and if they all lie contiguous ; though even under those limitations, if he really acts the part I have described, he will not eat the bread of idleness.

You perceive I do not blink the charge to which my principle is exposed, of being troublesome : on the contrary, although I maintain that the employment will have its own pleasure, and the success which I am sure will follow a judicious perseverance in it will be a high reward ; yet I clearly consider that the time of

a man who so engages himself will be completely filled up, and his faculties thoroughly occupied. It is no easy matter to manage so large a family. Why should we expect five hundred or a thousand untutored negroes to be more reasonable in their ideas and conduct, than as many of our own common people would be at home? It is highly important that we should not expect too much of negroes in those attempts to improve their condition, which will always be attended with difficulty. If they have been too long considered as brutes, let us not now fly to the other extreme, and expect that they will be found angels. If it is necessary to bear with their unreasonableness, to allow for their ignorance, to manage their waywardness, and to exercise much patience and perseverance in convincing them of their true interests, let us consider that the creation of this task was our own deed. In bringing a million of Africans to the western side of the Atlantic, we imported all the frailties and imperfections, as well as the better qualities of human nature. We cannot get out of the difficulty—it is *men* we have to do with; and, if we do not use them as such, we shall at

once act wrong, *and lose our money*, as we have hitherto done.

You will think I have expatiated sufficiently on that sort of treatment of negroes which I like. Permit me now to give you an anecdote or two shewing the treatment I don't like.

Once, in the West Indies, a person talking to me of an estate where he had been manager, mentioned in an incidental manner that he had, on a particular occasion, saved a negro of the proprietor's from being hanged. "Poor creature," said I, "what a happy circumstance—how did it happen?" "I will tell you," said my new acquaintance, drily:—"It was a valuable wench—she was his principal washerwoman; he had unfortunately got into a recent love of his bottle, and in a fit of passion one day he took it into his head he would flog her: she was an excellent negro, and had been for many years a confidential house servant. She took the affront so deeply that she went into the stable and hung herself. I happened to pass and cut her down, just in time:—she was worth a deal of money." Money! will any one say, was this all the man talked of? Did he not betray the least sympathy with

the deeply wounded feelings which could drive the poor woman to such a desperate act ? Nothing of the sort ! the whole observation he meant to convey was the lucky accident, and the promptitude by which he had saved his employer an article of property to a considerable amount which had nearly perished. At least, if any other sentiment existed in his mind, no looks or expressions of mine could draw it from his lips. This person had gone through various situations with credit ; he filled at this time an office of some responsibility, and, in short, was esteemed a respectable man.—But he had come early in life to the West Indies !

Having occasion once to stop at an estate where there was no resident proprietor, I was received by the manager. He was a married man, and, besides his wife, had another respectable white female relation living under his roof ; the whole family being natives of one of the colonies. As we sat at dinner, at which were present another white man or two, and the white children of my host, the doors and windows being all open as usual in that country, a negro boy, of about six or seven years old, ran

screaming past the gallery, followed close by a snarling terrier. Though I hoped the child was only frightened, I could not help springing up from my seat to throw at the dog the first article I could lay hold of. I found one of the boy's legs streaming with blood, the animal having bit him severely in several places. I brought the little creature into the room. The whole company kept their seats and their composure, as they had done from the first moment, including the *Ladies*. "Tom," said the landlord, addressing his attendant coolly, and hardly moving himself or looking at the boy, "take him to the hospital. Pray, sir (to me) sit down—don't trouble yourself." I was indeed a little surprized that all the trouble, as it was called, was left to the principal guest: but I presently discovered that the good manners of the family were exercised to the utmost already, in imposing silence upon them after the freedom I had used with a favourite. I could not help saying afterwards with some asperity to one of the party, "Had a company of duchesses in London seen such an accident happen to a beggar child in the street not one of them could have sat

unmoved!"—But the blood of a negro infant is less affecting to female creole nerves than the squeal of a dog.

I do not mean to recite instances of direct cruelty. Happily, indeed, I have not witnessed such deeds of horror as those which are too numerous and too well authenticated, though I have occasionally seen examples of unfeelingness and severity which I cannot forget. But what always strikes me, and what I wish to point out by my anecdotes, is the *low place* which is assigned to the negro in the *estimation* of his white superior; the small account that is made of whatever befalls him either in mind or body: he is hardly supposed to have a sense of pain, and much less a sense of indignity. "They do not feel as we do," said an official person once to me, when conversing respecting the punishment of a negro, which we had both been required to witness. The criminal had well deserved his punishment for a desperate assault on a young black female; but I could neither agree with nor relish this gentleman's sentiment: I not only think they feel, but I *wish* them to do so when *merited* punishment is

inflicted. To think otherwise is to deem punishment not to be of the avail which law intends : it is to turn its only use and its only effect into the hardening of our own hearts. In fact we here perceive a source quite competent to the production of all the outrages that were ever charged against the colonies.

A negro is not a *person* in the West Indies ; he is a *thing*. I do not mean merely in the technical language of colonial law ; I allude to what constantly comes out in common conversation. Colonists do not say the negro *who* or *whom*, but generally the negro *which*, did so and so, or was so and so done to ; in the same manner as any of the lower animals would be talked of. Look at an inventory of an estate : what are the first two articles ?—The land and buildings. The negroes come next, just before the cattle. Let not these things be deemed trifles ; they at once exhibit and give birth to trains of thought, and these are continually operative in conduct. How can the white children of planters, brought up in the midst of such ideas and customs, regard the sable race in a light much superior to that in which our young gentlemen consider

their ponies and dogs? How can they act to them much better? Indeed domestic oppressions and degradations are no small part of the evils of that land of slaves, nor is there any thing in which a change of manners is more desirable than in the early tyranny in which white creoles are trained. If a very small degree of the discipline from which I would fain relieve the inferiors were now and then bestowed on the young gentry, the happiness of all parties, not excluding the parents, would be very greatly increased.

West Indian writers are fond of enlarging on the value of the colonies to the trade, manufactures, and shipping of the mother country. But let it be remembered, that if they are valuable, it is the negro population that makes them so. What sort of a list of exports, to say nothing of imports, would appear on the custom-house books if England had only the handful of whites to deal with? The answer must show the overweening importance of a certain party. Are the latter then for ever to insist that all the attention of the parent state shall be lavished on the masters, and that she is never to cast a

thought on the interests of the multitudes under them, who are in fact such valuable subjects to her? Moderate men in the West Indies feel that this has been too much the case in past times, and they wish others to experience that the labourer has a reasonable share of the consideration of the mother country. These men are the true friends, and the violent writers are, in fact, the enemies, of the colonies; for if the voice of reason and conscience is not at length listened to,—if that mild and placid stream is not allowed to work its way peaceably, I deeply fear it may swell into another sort of tide; a tide which if it once begin to press, may be less gentle in its pressure; the current of events—the course of nature itself—the sweeping flood of providential retribution:—but I forbear:— I wish not to enlarge on ideas, whose awful realization I sincerely deprecate.

West Indians think the protection of Britain can never be extended to the negro without the circumstance coming to his knowledge, and some risk being incurred of his being misguided by it. There has indeed been too much noise hitherto; but if colonists will coolly examine

the matter, they will really find that the fault has been chiefly their own. Two things have been blended together which are in their natures distinct. England may interfere, and when it is necessary, must interfere strongly: but the slave need hear little about her; all the benefit he feels should come through, and should appear to him to come originally from, the court of the colony:—the only sovereign he ought to know much about. Nothing would be more easy, if West Indians, instead of being prejudiced, would be reasonable with the mother country; or, at least, instead of being loudly angry, would be quiet.

If I should give you another quotation from the Bible, perhaps you will think me rather *preaching* too much. But when I have in the West Indies found myself sometimes in the midst of a good deal of luxury, and generally in the midst of the irreligion, pride, and unfeeling treatment of inferiors, which so strongly characterize that land of variously coloured men, I have felt it impossible to resist a strong impression of awe, from the following words of Him to whom men of all kindreds must bow as

Universal Master :—" If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to beat the men servants and maidens, and to eat and drink and to be drunken, the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware." I refer to the Evangelists, Matthew and Luke (Chap. 24, and Chap. 12.), for the rest of the solemn words.

I shall perhaps be told there is another text, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." I wish to remember it: I do not presume to set up a tribunal over my neighbour: but there is no breach of duty if any one of us recalls to the recollection of us all that there is one great judge. I have no pleasure in railing at my countrymen in the colonies: I am sensible they are in a very trying situation; and am only desirous that they should duly and constantly weigh its temptations and dangers, and guard against the prejudicial effects of these on their feelings, principles, and morals. The same caution would be necessary in this country if society were constituted of similar materials. In fact, if the labouring classes in Britain were

slaves, the character of all other classes would be lower than it is. Let the whites of the West Indies raise themselves by raising the opinion and consideration, if they cannot raise the actual state, in which their labourers are held ;—let them unite themselves to their brethren of the mother country to the utmost possible degree in all the feelings, habits, and laws, relating to this great matter :—then will follow improvement, safety, and mutual peace.

I have admitted that the whites have a task of great difficulty in their hands. To keep numerous bodies of men in that proper order which is absolutely necessary when they are once collected together, never was an easy matter since the world began. If negroes are children, every man who knows school boys will say that the managing of hundreds of them is not rendered less formidable, by the inexperience and impetuosity of youth having the strength and obstinacy of manhood superadded to them. But what is the result of all such considerations? Evidently that the thing which is most difficult in plantership should have the chief attention paid to it. Our land obeys the impulse

and takes the form which mechanical force gives it. The people who labour it can never be made to yield in the same manner; they *may* be managed, but not by brute force; it must be by means more complex, by a process requiring far more skill, and thought, and patience. Now what I would wish our brethren of the colonies to see and admit is the absurdity of letting the easier task engross almost all their attention, and leave them hardly any time for the object which is at once more difficult and more important. Is any other business on earth carried on in this manner, or if there be, is it a successful one? I only entreat West Indians, since they have a difficult task to perform, that they will bend all their minds to it. The greenness or sourness in an early fruit induces the gardener to cultivate it more carefully that he may secure his reward. The waywardness of children calls forth more patiently all the anxiety of parental management.

It is remarkable how close the connection is between amelioration in the condition of the slaves, and improvement in the moral character of the whites in the West Indies. There is one

subject which bears strongly on both of these topics: I mean the marriage of white men. The standard of morals in the colonies is so low, that by universal consent concubinage there stands established as virtue. Rank and privilege, which are strongly marked in every thing, seem to turn marriage into a distinction somewhat of the nature of nobility, and to reserve it in general for the proprietors and leading men of the colony. In Barbadoes, indeed, the uncommonly large proportion of whites produces rather a better effect on manners in this respect. But speaking generally of the colonies, managers are seldom married men, and to be so is a circumstance unfavourable to a manager's finding employment. As to subordinate white servants, such a thing is altogether out of the question, and if there ever was an instance of one of those persons having a wife, he must have found it necessary to support her at a distance from himself, and perhaps keep the circumstance a dead secret, or run the risk of their both starving. What pen can describe the vice which follows these wretched habits; the bad example to the slaves, and the tyranny over

the women and their jealous negro husbands? That proprietors shall change their own ideas on this subject is one of the most fundamental improvements wanting in the state of society in the colonies. Why will they not encourage married men in their service? Why will they not open a benefit which would run through every part of the colonial system, and carry peace and prosperity along with it?

I know the objection they have:—Creole white women are not good housewives. The superiority which the poorest of them claim over the black and coloured tribes, added to an indolence which it increases and indulges, makes them persons to sit and be served, rather than to stir and be useful; and a number of spoiled white children are a real nuisance on a plantation. These considerations are enough. Expediency and supposed self-interest have a louder voice for the ears of man than morals and religion. But West Indians might have long ago perceived in their experience a confirmation of the old truth that such expediency is short-lived, and such self-interest mistaken. Those blind guides lead us to give existence,

and increase, and strength, to a half-cast race, whom by a second infatuation we make our enemies, by the manner in which we treat them. White families may be troublesome, but mulatto families are dangerous. This subject I shall presently touch on ;—meanwhile, I would observe, that to avoid one evil by putting another, and a worse one, in its place is not wise. To turn it if possible into good would be a better remedy ; and, in the present case, this seems not impracticable. If the encouragement given to white agents were in proportion as their wives made themselves useful among negroes, in tending the young, nursing the sick, &c. without requiring swarms of attendants for their own persons ; and if, in this view, industrious females from Europe were welcomed as valuable acquisitions, which, with their humanity, intelligence, and activity, they would undoubtedly be, among the women and children on our plantations, we should soon see a material improvement in Creole manners and ideas, and proprietors would, I am sure, derive much pecuniary benefit in the end.

Such an advance in morals would be followed

by an advance in religion among the middling and lower classes of Europeans in our colonies. What thinking man will say that the latter is not a great desideratum?

Family men are given more than others to employ their leisure hours in reading useful and informing books. Subscription libraries, containing valuable works, might become common in our colonies, and introduce some of the literature of Europe, and along with it every thing useful and intelligent that has been written by West Indians themselves, among a race of men who, at present, know not very much of either one or the other. Who can tell the benefit which proprietors would derive if the dissipation which too generally prevails were to yield to domestic, sober, intelligent habits, among men so valuable and necessary as the managers and overseers, the book-keepers and mechanics, of our plantations?

Many of the above observations apply to the people of colour. Why should they not be encouraged to intermarry? Why should not a preference in various employments be given to married couples of good character among

them, when the woman is willing to be active and useful, rather than to batchelors, either white or coloured? That neglected race have many claims upon us. Indeed it is a thing hardly to be believed in other parts of the world, that men are so thoughtless about their offspring as we sometimes find Europeans in the colonies. How melancholy is it to meet occasionally with mulatto slaves, who are the children, not merely of subordinate white men, but reputedly of gentlemen of property! Even when this defiance of natural affection does not rear its hardened front, what is our conduct towards our own flesh and blood? How few men have any higher views for their coloured daughters than that they shall be concubines, and shall run all the risks of being thrown from that state into prostitution! I know not that the cruelty to sons is much less when they are sent to Europe for education, and when, after being received into company there, they find upon their return to the West Indies, that the lowest white person disdains to associate with them. Their country is no country to them. Is it any wonder that these men, coming out enlightened in mind and

high in spirit, and finding themselves and their sisters in such a state of wretched degradation, are ripe every moment for revolution? We talk of the slaves, and of danger from them, but here in fact is our danger. Accordingly it was the people of colour who raised the insurrection in Grenada; it was they who effected the mighty overturn in St. Domingo, portentous still in its aspect over all the Antilles. It is thus that the West Indies meet their sin in their punishment. Yet, alas, those parts which have as yet escaped seem to go blindly on in the old course. No reformation of manners is to be perceived—no direction of the attention of colonial legislatures to this important subject—no encouragement to white agents to marry, the only mode of preventing the numbers of the coloured-race from becoming more and more formidable, and of raising a white population to support the white interest. To this hour every time that a white man has a child, he is adding, not to the safety, but to the danger of himself and his colony. I confess that I am sometimes alarmed when I look at this course of blind conduct—so blind and obstinate as to

appear downright infatuation. I seem to feel an earthquake beneath me, and to hear the appalling sounds issuing from the gulph, "*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.*"*

I shall be asked, Am I one of those theorists who would destroy the white ascendancy? I answer, No.—As the system of colonization and the connection with the mother country stand, it is necessary to maintain it. Nay, I think that in the West Indies, as in the East, the supremacy of British interest and authority is the surest pledge the natives can possess for the improvement of morals and the increase of happiness. But fortunately it is easy, I think, to maintain the ascendancy in question, and

* In the "*Papers relating to the West Indies,*" one of the clergymen of Barbadoes reports to Governor Beckwith, that it appears, that in the parish of St. Michael, which includes the town of Bridgetown, the free coloured people had increased one half between the years 1802 and 1811.—He adds, "*Indeed if we consider that great numbers of them obtain their freedom every year, and, that out of every four, at least three are females, who obtain that privilege by becoming the favourites of white men, it is not too much to conclude, that they may double their present numbers in the course of the next fifteen years.*"

Papers, &c. p. 3.—Return by Rev. W. Garnett.

yet to deal more justice and kindness to both coloured and black tribes than we have ever done. Encourage marriage among all classes of whites; do this even with every sacrifice and at every expense; admitting, for argument's sake, what however I do not by any means grant, that pecuniary disadvantage on the whole is to follow. In each white child that you rear, you rear a defender of that ascendancy. Induce by every possible means the coloured people to marry among each other. Send none of them to Europe who are ever to return; but give them the best education the West Indies can afford. Encourage them to deserve employment in their own station; the pride of birth will always attach them to the whites, and the attachment will operate fully when degradation and irritation are not constantly made to gall them. Then they will feel that they have a country—they will be interested in its peace—they may even perhaps prove a bond of union between their white and black progenitors;—and thus possibly, under the direction of a merciful Providence, become to a repenting people the instru-

ment of averting, instead of hastening the calamities, which the irreligion and immorality of the West Indies have deserved.

I love to encourage such hopes, and to anticipate that my countrymen and fellow colonists may yet be persuaded to bethink themselves, and to turn their attention, before it be too late, to those great subjects which they can no more hinder from pressing on them one day, than they can stop the stars in their courses. I am sure, when I advise them to anticipate the event, to meet the evil, and, if possible, turn it to good, I give them a sounder advice than those men do who loudly call on them to shut their eyes, hold blindly on, and take all consequences. I am confident that such persons give themselves up to a strong and unhappy impression, which I *have known* to fill the minds of violent West Indians, that a dreadful convulsion does in fact await that country. I am quite sure it is often under this fatal and reckless feeling that they resist all amelioration. The crops or consignments of the present day are the object they keep before their sight ;—they hope the change won't happen in *their* time, and they go no further in their

views. Surely a man who advises a wise opening of the eyes to evident circumstances, a calm and moderate consideration of them, and a deliberate and manly providing for the future, by the gradual improvement of whatever needs to be improved, is a better friend to the West Indies than such desperate and selfish counsellors.

LETTER VII.

ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COLONIAL CONTROVERSY.

THE necessity of amelioration is admitted by all West Indians. Some of them speak openly and candidly; by others the acknowledgment is let out in rather a different manner. The latter would be apt to take fire at hearing such an assertion as I have just begun with making. “What, *we* allow the need of reforms! truly we have no such confessions to make—we maintain that the West Indies will do very well if they are only let alone.” Yet, if you converse a little further with these gentlemen, and specify some of the abuses which have been matters of notorious fact, the reply you will receive is, “O but nothing of that kind takes place now-a-days—some time ago,

indeed, wrong things happened." You ask, "When?" In reply some number of years back is loosely named to you, with the saving clause again repeated, "but there is a favourable change." Now if you recur to the period, whatever it be, to which you are thus referred, you will find that exactly the same language was then used, "Evils certainly have existed, but do not now exist." Go back to the beginning of the abolition controversy, and the statement still meets you in such faithful identity, that one could almost think the violent advocates of that side of the question had copied stated words, at stated periods, for a record of their own shame, and of the triumph of their adversaries. How mean and unworthy is this shuffling. How much more respectable would the anti-abolitionists appear in the eyes of the government and people of this country, if they could refer to any one period of time when they were found, saying, in a fair and manly manner, "We admit that in this or that matter there is abuse; it needs to be remedied; and a remedy shall be applied." What weight with the public they would in this case command at

the present moment, while, pointing to the remedy, they would be able to say, "Now you see we have fulfilled our promise, and may well expect to be trusted in future." But as things stand, even in those cases in which reforms have been brought about by quiet and reasonable West Indians, the noisy party have deprived themselves of all credit in them. Plain men must feel that the very reform itself is a conviction of their past disingenuousness, and therefore a source of suspicion upon all their present assertions. They must feel that every reform was compulsory on them like the abolition itself, and stands as a proof of the necessity of that constant interference of the mother country, which it is the object of all their arguments to put an end to.

Candour would therefore have been true wisdom, to say nothing else of it. It would still be wisdom; but I am sorry to say, that to this hour I do not see it practised. I read pamphlets, of which it is the tendency, whether it be the intention or not, to deceive the people of this country as to the actual state of the British colonies. Is the question in discussion the

religious instruction of the slaves? A pompous detail is held forth of the number of parish churches there, although it is a fact familiar to every man who knows the West Indies, that a list of the churches in Switzerland would have nearly as much bearing on the subject. In the same manner, a muster is made of all that has been done by Roman Catholic colonists, and by foreign Protestant colonists, for *their* people, to our shame; and of all that has been done by the sects of Moravians and Methodists, for our people, in the midst of the *opposition and hostility* of the very men (happily not the whole number of British colonists), the pamphleteers and their too numerous abettors, who join in setting themselves with the utmost determination against those identical Christian teachers.*

* The author of the Thoughts wishes the reports of the governors to be "*collectively* considered."—No wonder. His plan is laid wisely; or, if I may borrow a term of his own, "*craftily*." He is sensible that, on the subject of the Christian instruction of slaves, he and the "Corporation of Kingston" make rather a sorry figure standing together: he therefore thrusts himself among as many dozens of sectarian teachers, white and coloured, Moravian and Methodist, and as many thousands

Again, are West Indian legislatures accused of having discouraged manumissions? The charge is rebutted by asserting, gravely, that one great object is to discourage those illicit connections by which white men become fathers. We are really taught, without the least smile appearing

of black disciples, as he can find in Danish islands, or any where else. Not liking such new company, however, he shews himself the true man of the world as soon as they have answered his purpose, and in a few minutes disclaims them with a look of the most fashionable non-acquaintance, or rather eyes them with all the contempt and anger which belong to his cause. *Naturam expellas, furca tamen usque recurret.* Meanwhile he flatters himself that he has managed matters vastly well, and persuaded the good easy people of England that he and his party are quite the friends of negro instruction. He gets off with a silly story about a Mr. Tallboys, respecting which all that need be remarked is, that it says much for the good conduct of the Methodists, that nothing else is brought forward against them. Even that story assumes a very different complexion in Mr. Watson's respectable Defence.

I do not value sectarian labours among our negroes, *because* they are sectarian, but because there are no others exerted in this field. Some gentlemen may only have a sneer for the occasion; but with me the feeling is sincere regret when truth compels me to join in the observation, that among the black population of the British West Indies, "the instruction of the clergymen of

on the face of our teacher, that the legislatures had just discovered, when they made those enactments, that the progeny was not only dangerous, but, marvellous to tell, spurious also—a melancholy circumstance which, alas, had been quite unknown to them, it seems, till

the church of England is nothing.” Happy should I be to see it otherwise! May the time come, when the “superior zeal” of the clergy may wipe off the stain which certainly has hitherto attached to them, that there is no instruction, generally speaking, but that which “is to be obtained from the sectarian preachers.” I have no wish to deal in general reflections on any body of men, especially of the sacred order. I really presume that the English clergy in the West Indies have not been led to consider the negroes as part of the cure of souls to which they are appointed. If so, the fault is at home, or at least is divided. Either their charge is improperly limited to the whites, or there is improperly no provision of separate ministers for the blacks. And if so, this would have been the fair and true defence for Mr. Marryat to have set up for the colonial clergy, if he really wished to defend them. Wherever the fault lies, the fact stands known to every West Indian, that, speaking of the British colonies at large, the opposing either the attendance of the negroes upon sectaries, or the visits of sectaries to the estates, unquestionably has always hitherto been, and still remains, “opposing positive prohibitions to the *only* attainable means of religious instruction and worship.”

the numbers began to increase so much. In short, a tone of morality is assumed so imposing, that if the occasion admitted of risibility, it would be hardly possible to resist the provocation it gives to it. A lecture on morals comes from the West Indies, and the grand specific which it presents is universal celibacy ! Really some gentlemen do reckon pretty strongly on the credulity of their party, when they imagine that a single one of them supposes that they themselves believe what they say. We hear not a word of any intention among legislatures or individual proprietors to encourage marriage ; and yet we are told that it is wished to discourage illicit connections.* The only natural and

* *Thoughts, &c.* p. 135, second edition.—There is not a single argument in all this publication where a little candour would have been of more use than here. A charge had been made against the colonies, that some of their legislatures had raised the tax on manumissions as high as 500*l.* currency, 300*l.* and other large sums. The reply begins with observing (p. 134), that in Jamaica the said tax is only 10*l.* So far well ; and had this statement been followed by a recommendation, or even a wish, that the other islands would follow the example of that colony, and reduce what certainly must appear to most people to be a “ most oppressive tax,” on a father “ wishing

ordained remedy is refused, and yet we are expected to believe, that for an evil which is painted in the strong colours it deserves, a remedy is honestly and sincerely sought. If enthusiasm consists in a contempt of the only means of accomplishing a favourite and valu-

to release his own offspring from slavery," the writer would have shewn himself at once consistent and reasonable. But what is his conclusion? At first it appears to be that both the 10*l.* and the 500*l.* are equally right and proper sums; an opinion which, though not very consistent with itself, does not much surprise the reader after the other discussions in the pamphlet, the object of which always appears to be to prove that nothing wrong, or even mistaken, can ever be done any where on the western side of the Atlantic. Presently, however, it is found that the author is implying, though not pronouncing, a censure on Jamaica for abiding by the moderate sum—for he is in the midst of an unqualified defence of the larger fines; in the course of which, in short, he gives us to understand, that it is the wish of those other legislatures, and his own wish, that, as the only way of keeping down the numbers of the dangerous half-cast race, all coloured children, that is to say, probably nineteen out of twenty of the children born to white men in the West Indies, shall be slaves. Rather than condemn certain customs and manners, which, as generally happens in the case of crime, call for new crimes to remedy them; a British member of parliament is not ashamed to plead for measures, of which it is the inevitable effect, and must

able object;—if fanaticism is allied with an opposition to the settled course of nature, I am sorry to see the West Indian legislatures thus libelled as enthusiasts and fanatics. However, it is lucky the charge is not believed—for every body knows that they really never thought

continue to be so as long as the laws of nature will not yield to human legislation, that the slavery of the West Indies shall be systematically carried on partly in British blood! This gentleman, too, professes to be an enemy to innovations;—but did our forefathers, even in the midst of the evil example they set in commencing the state of society in question, ever conceive such a horrid thought as the wilful entailing of this consequence upon it? The people of Jamaica are certainly obliged to him for absolving them from the opprobrium of joining in the plan. But by their anomalous friend, half accuser and half champion, it seems they must be content now to be deemed deficient not only in wisdom but in morality too, when compared with their brethren to windward. They have no conception of the high tone of morals to be attained by the discouragers of manumissions, among whom a celibacy, to which that of the church of Rome is nothing, is to extend its wondrous reign through all ranks of tropical society, undisturbed even by marriage itself, the latter being an expedient not worth the taking notice of, so far as this colonial Blackstone lays down the law. He tells us nothing more than this, and he tells it very gravely. “The plain *truth*,” says he, of the case is, that the *views* with which these laws were framed,

about the matter. Most earnestly do I wish, that not in a foolish manner as imputed to them, but wisely, before it be too late, they would turn their attention to the very important subject of the unhappy substitute for marriage, which prevails universally throughout the colonies. It is impossible to touch on this topic, however casually or frequently, without feeling an inclination to dwell on its momentous consequence.

were to *discourage these illicit and vicious connections*, and thus to prevent the growth of a great political evil," &c.
 "and the West India legislatures are reviled for *not encouraging and rewarding prostitution by freedom*." Ah, party spirit, how thou dost abuse thy power over us! The truth on the contrary is, as every West Indian knows, that any views of discouraging such connections never were uttered by a single individual concerned in framing the laws in question; and that no views whatever were entertained but the simple discouraging of manumissions—the "political evil," and the *only* evil contemplated in the case. Were this the proper place, it would be easy to shew that the policy itself is mistaken, as it is wretched. But this note is already too long. It is impossible to conclude it in any other words than those which this unhesitating counsel had employed in the very sentence preceding the quotation just taken from him. "We can hardly forbear smiling at the mock gravity with which these expressions are used, and at the same time feeling angry at the effrontery with which they are prostituted!"

But I was at present led to it merely in the course of shewing the miserable shifts to which men are reduced, who are determined to maintain an argument at all sacrifices of common sense and known fact. It is melancholy to see how long this train of disengenuousness has gone on in the controversy. As I hinted in a former letter, you find several of the statements made to parliament in 1789, betraying a willingness to give a certain sort of colouring to some of the objects enquired into. In short, the system so emphatically referred to by Governor Prevost (I believe), when on some occasion he talks of colonial laws made to blind the people of England, appears unhappily to have got so habitual to the majority of West Indian representations, that a plain honest colonist, who is not heated by the controversy, and has the command of his judgment and senses, so as to see things and speak of them as they are, is not a little ashamed of the appearance his brethren make. I sincerely wish that gentlemen would at last abandon a line of conduct which certainly has not answered their purpose, and which, even if it did, is so utterly discreditable

that I hope they would not, and indeed I really believe they do not, pursue it in their other affairs.

Similar is the spirit in which another part of the controversy is managed, or rather, as I think, mismanaged, by the West Indian leaders; I mean that part which relates to the prominent abuses and acts of cruelty which have become matter of legal proof. A candid and benevolent planter rejoices when such detections take place, and wishes that every delinquent, great and small, were dragged forth to equal punishment and reprobation. Being willing to admit, and accustomed to lament the radical evils of the colonial system, and sincerely desirous to see a gradual cure, if he makes any further observation on this subject, it is this; that looking at human nature in its present state, seeing how unfit man shews himself, in all parts of the globe, to be trusted with absolute power, and what cruelties and oppressions sometimes are discovered in corners even of Britain itself, the land of general light, and legal restraint; his wonder is, not that deeds of horror stain some of the annals of the colonies,

but that a single page is free from them. His vindication of the West Indies at large is only of this negative kind, and it is restrained too by an apprehension which he cannot smother, that many a dreadful scene has been a dark one, and will never be known till that awful day when the secrets of men shall be made manifest. His palliative feelings are chiefly feelings of thankfulness that in the midst of a system which naturally tends to produce crime and woe every hour, there are various restraints, which under the administration of a merciful Providence, have the effect of diminishing the one and the other;—that where strong principle is wanting, there are sometimes to be found substitutes, which, though less estimable in themselves, answer the same purpose in an inferior degree;—that good nature in some men leaves their negroes in possession of a tolerably easy life, and indolence in others prevents their taking the trouble of using them ill. To these restraints he wishes to see added every possible improvement of feeling, every possible interference of law. When therefore the atrocities of a Hodge or a Huggins are brought to light, perceiving in

them new proofs of the constant tendency of power to become cruel, and cruelty to become hardened, he conceals not what he thinks of the necessity of reform in a system which upholds such power. As to the horrid facts themselves, he feels, in short, as an Englishman does at the discovery of the smaller abuses which take place in England. Such abuses, of inferior degree, and such detections, do occur at home; and how are they regarded? Do able writers resent the enquiries, and are their pamphlets applauded? No,—if one poor chimney-sweeper's boy loses his life by cruel treatment, the popular indignation is deservedly so roused that the culprit can hardly be brought with safety to and from his trial. If cotton mills and mad houses are found to need regulation, parliament interferes with a zeal and attention second only to those which accomplished the abolition of the slave trade. But what is the conduct of the West Indian casuists respecting the deeper wrongs of the other side of the Atlantic? They betray an evident soreness on the subject; an impatience under its discussion; an anger that gross instances are repeatedly referred to. This temper,

as usual, leads them into the most unwarrantable statements. They scruple not to try to persuade the world that the deeds of the unhappy departed man of Tortola and triumphant man of Nevis are regarded by every individual in those places, and throughout the West Indies, exactly as the Shadwell murders are thought of in London*—those deeds of horror which some years ago electrified all the metropolis.—Is it so indeed? Would those murderers if discovered have been openly received into society—visited and entertained from day to day, and from year to year, in classes of the community claiming respectability? How is it that gentlemen can commit themselves with the public with such representations? The fact is that the state of society in the West Indies does not admit of crime being frowned upon in the case of a powerful delinquent, as every friend to humanity there would wish. The communities are too small, the system productive of abuse is too deeply rooted, and the ideas of the majority of the whites are too long accustomed to run in a certain channel. A long time must

* Thoughts, p. 161.—Second edition.

pass before these things can be better. This mode of treating the subject would have been consistent with truth; but it would have been confessing too much for the purpose of a party pamphlet. It seems to be the opinion of some persons, that to deal in West India discussions is like dealing in horses. I have heard that a certain reputable class of men called jockeys have settled it to be undisputed law, that the vulgar thing called plain matter of fact may with all propriety be run down as fair game, provided that by so doing the sale of a horse may be effected. I would earnestly recommend it to my brother colonists and their advocates, to adopt as many as they please of the other laws which have originated in England, and to leave the use of this one to the society that gave it birth. I must also tell the self-elected champions that, however they may flatter themselves, *all* West Indians do not approve of their conduct. In the noise and clamour of the present moment, in which the applause of two prominent classes, the thoughtless and the successful, is most distinguished, it may appear that the cheers of popularity will never abate. But there are men

in the colonies who prefer truth to victory, safety to triumph, and the permanent good of the West Indies to the party spirit of a day. Those wise and good individuals may not perhaps always continue to be in the minority when they feel and say as they are now disposed to do

Non tale auxilio, non defensoribus istis

Tempus eget.

On the other hand, I have an observation to make which I must not suppress, even although it should condemn some things that have dropped from my own pen ;—which, however, I am not aware that it will do. It is this : that it would be a good rule to be always observed by us, the advocates of amelioration (I say us, not that I pretend to assume any important place in the controversy, but because I wish to give no exhortation from which I would exclude myself), to write as if we were writing not in Britain but in the West Indies. Let us suppose that we have our property, family, and friends, entirely in one of the colonies ; let us imagine ourselves sitting there in the midst of all these, and surrounded by a numerous black and coloured population, whom it is delicate to manage, and

necessary to keep free from the dangerous influence of mistake and extravagance. I do not mean by this that we are to call evil good and good evil. I do not mean that those feelings are to be neutralized, that zeal blunted, nor those active exertions palsied, by which, in the colonies themselves, and on each spot where abuse takes place, I wish the oppressed to experience summary protection, and the delinquent to know that the hand of justice has a strong grasp. But I think, that as a general feeling in our minds, a spirit of charity and mercy towards the whites, our own brethren and countrymen, ought always to be, as much as possible, united with kindness for the blacks : genuine Christian kindness demands this union ; and, indeed, there is in such a spirit wisdom as well as harmlessness ; for the peace of the one class of inhabitants of the colonies is not easily to be separated from that of the other. No man thinks more strongly than I do of the crimes, both against God and man, which have stained the British West Indies ; and I have no hesitation in saying, that the judgments of heaven, in my humble opinion, have often fallen on that country. The idea

may be laughed at by some persons, as superstitious ; but I should hold it criminal to shrink from the sentiment, that, avoiding all notice of particular instances of bad or good success, respecting which it is not our business to judge, and surveying widely and largely, as the case requires, the disastrous history of the colonies, and of speculators in the colonies in general, it is quite clear that disappointment, disease, and calamity in every form, have been with little intermission employed by the Almighty to testify to the men and the communities of those regions, that their way was found perverse before him. And if they do not at last listen to the warning voice, he may commission against them the sorer visitations which await his call, or rather which seem to have been long mercifully and almost miraculously restrained by his patience and forbearance ; he may at length remove the restraint and give loose to the bursting messengers of wrath. But I cannot but deprecate this : from the bottom of my heart I pray, God forbid that I should see a sword on the inhabitants of the British colonies. I cannot cease to be anxious that my country-

men may at last accept the chastisements they have received, nor insist on more. However vainly, I cannot but earnestly wish, that I possessed any means of prevailing on them to turn their minds seriously to those reforms which they owe, both to the religion they profess, and to the fellow-men who are placed under them. In some quarters the wish would not be vain. Much is in the power of governors and legislatures, especially the latter, in these great matters; greater than any other subjects that can come before them.

Another observation I would make on my own side of the question, is on the propriety of always discriminating between friends and foes. This is a duty owing to individuals in the West Indies. It is a duty owing also to the cause itself, and to our own encouragement in promoting it. Let us be assured that it is not altogether for nothing that the long controversy has existed: let us take the satisfaction of believing that the labours of thirty years have not been quite in vain. It is indeed true, that benefit is not yet much heard of; for it is noise that makes itself be heard, and wrong is always

noisy; while the conviction of right and the advance of truth are silent in their progress. It is also true that efforts must not be slackened. But it is a comfort that good has been done. Even this is a good not to be despised, that the thoughts of men have been decidedly turned to a subject they never dwelt on before; and that in the minds of even the most determined enemies, an agitation now constantly exists, such as prognosticates a surrender one day of the strong hold which formerly was kept in peace. Both parties *think* more than they once did; the one willingly, the other by compulsion; and the great evil of the case once was, that there was no thought about it. Some men would think rightly if they were out of the trammels of fashion; some would speak if out of the awe of neighbourhood; some would act if out of the bondage of debt. All such persons should be encouraged. Let not the smoking flax be quenched: if a colonist is not prepared as yet to go all lengths with me, I will take him as far as he will go, and unfeignedly welcome his company and his support, such as he will give them. Even neutral cases are not always quite

unpromising. A man who has only the negative quality of not being tyrannical may appear of a soft and useless character; but, by time and pains, good-nature may be fostered into thought, and thought may be ripened into principle.

In all countries the evils which are constantly before the eyes make less impression on mankind than those with which they are not familiarized. Of this propensity in human nature, I think we should avail ourselves to rouse the dormant feelings of colonists in favour of their fellow men. The controversy itself has prejudiced and steeled many of them against the impressions which other persons receive from the relation of abuses committed in the West Indies. But there are parts of the abolition question which, though now of old date, may be made use of for that purpose. Certain parties, indeed, may be very willing that these should grow obsolete; but they ought never, perhaps, to be allowed to become so as long as a single reform is wanting—because the battle of the present day, although fought on a different field, is maintained by adversaries with exactly the same weapons as

they used then; a circumstance very easy and very important to hold out to view. The portions of the old controversy I refer to, are the crimes which the slave trade engendered on the coast of Africa, and the horrors of the middle passage. These things were never much known among the subordinate classes of whites in the West Indies, and the present race of those persons is in general as ignorant of them as the inhabitants of China. I remember once conversing with a manager, as thorough a disciple of the old school as ever stood over a flogging. I related to him a story, to which, as it is short, I shall give a place here, though it is old and well known.* In the month of March 1783, there was tried, at Guildhall, a case of insurance on a cargo of negroes. The master of the slave ship had overshot his port, Jamaica, and was afraid of wanting water before he could beat up again to the island. He himself fell sick. In the course of his illness he ordered his mate (the man who gave the evidence,) to throw overboard forty-six slaves handcuffed; and he was readily obeyed. Two days after, he ordered thirty-six

* Ramsay preserves the tale of wholesale murder.

more to be thrown after them ; and after two days more, another parcel of forty. Ten others, who had been permitted to take the air on deck unfettered, jumped into the sea indignantly after them. The ship after all brought into port four hundred and eighty gallons of water.—My auditor, who had stood many plantation scenes, could not stand this recital. Human nature rallied in him ; he could not restrain his expressions, and for once in his life he felt that a negro was “ a man and a brother.”

To Missionaries I would make an observation or two. I have already expressed my conviction that Prudence is their motto ; yet it will, at least, not be discarded by a few words from a real friend. It is natural for an Englishman to be continually thinking about liberty, whatever part of the globe he is in—liberty, both personal and political. It is bred with him, I had almost said born with him, to do so. I consider it, therefore, as a happy circumstance for the success and safety of missions among slaves, and a providential appointment for the good of our colonial bondmen, that Christianity was first made known to them by men from

other parts of Europe. The Moravians gave to the benevolent undertaking a certain sort of sober and chastened tone, by which, while their feelings took full scope in the legitimate province of religion, they never were allowed one moment's play in any political direction. It very plainly appears, I think, that the Methodist body must have adopted the same wise system, in the instructions they have given their Missionaries; and it is of the greatest importance that the latter shall duly appreciate the reasonable and salutary nature of such injunctions, and shall every moment bear in their minds the necessity of acting thoroughly in their spirit. If ever men were placed in a situation nearly allied to that of those earliest of all Missionaries, whose commission was limited to the land of Judea, and whose critical circumstances their divine Master did not disguise from them, it is the men who go to preach the kingdom of Heaven to the blacks in the West Indies. If ever the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove were needful joint qualities, they are needful in their case. I would almost say to them, that it is one of the sacri-

fices they are called to by the service into which they have entered, to feel as if they had disfranchised themselves as Englishmen, and to imagine that they are living, as those predecessors, to whom I have alluded, lived, under one of the Cæsars. As men, indeed, they may and ought to be thankful that they are Britons; but as teachers of the heathen, they must forget their country. They must enter, in some degree, into the spirit of the devoted individual with whom, I believe, the Moravian missions originated; who was willing to sell himself as a slave, that he and his object might be admitted together into the colonies.

To speak less strongly, I confess it appears to me that nothing more is necessary than that they shall think and preach as the New Testament speaks. It never interferes in matters of a civil and political nature, farther than in enjoining obedience to all that are in authority. Why does it do this? Evidently for the same reason for which it refrains from giving particular directions in many other matters. It issues general precepts; and these are addressed to the governors of men, as well as the governed.

“As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also so to them.” “Love thy neighbour as thyself.” If men in authority, of whatever description, would follow these golden rules, it would be a matter of very little consequence how any particular form of society were modelled. Till they do so, the possession of personal and political protection, secured by such a constitution as that of Britain, is an unspeakable blessing, and every one who has it may, as an individual, value the prize. But preachers of the gospel point to a constitution, which is to bless all mankind. I have no idea that it must necessarily be supposed that its beneficial spread is to be attended with political changes, or that the men of that day are every where to see the body politic modelled according to some particular fashion, suitable to our ideas in this age and country. The face of society, like the face of nature, is, I presume, susceptible of endless diversities, and all of these capable of fulfilling the wisest and kindest purposes, under the direction of a gracious creator. Equity in the exercise of rule, and contentment under its mild sway;—in these two simple things I can

see the elements of the utmost happiness, of which our nature is capable in the present state of existence; and that, under all the varieties of which the government of men, in different climates and regions, can be susceptible. Without Christianity, such ideas would be utterly extravagant in a world like ours;—with it, they are sober, rational, practical. This wonder-working power is like the principle of gravitation—it possesses universal efficacy; no peculiarity of structure or circumstances can exempt from its influence. To introduce it wherever crime and woe may be reigning, is to supply an universal centre in a chaos. Every jarring element feels the magical, or rather divine influence: nothing perhaps needs to suffer annihilation, but each discordant particle taking obediently a place properly belonging to it, all becomes order and harmony. Except this wondrous alteration, no other change takes place. Even with respect to the state of master and slave, therefore, I know not, perhaps, the utmost of the degree of comfort which that relation of man with man may, in such circumstances, be capable of

producing. I have not seen communities of Christian masters and Christian slaves;—the former deeply impressed with the principles, and fervently attached to the practice, of the religion they profess—the latter fulfilling their duties equally in its spirit:—masters, in short, such as the Philemon of the New Testament, and slaves like the restored Onesimus. I do not expect to live to see this: but if I did, I should not probably think any change of relation necessary between the parties. Not but that it appears likely, I confess, that, in proportion as Christianity is diffused, slavery will gradually, amidst its genial warmth, melt away in other parts of the world, as it has done in Europe. If I am asked my hopes and wishes, they are, that it may do so—as indeed they transpired in a former letter. But possibly there may be here a little prejudice in my mind; and I am not in the purpose of defending it strongly, or of maintaining that such a result must be considered as an indispensable and inseparable consequence. At any rate, to think otherwise at present may do good, and can do no harm. Supposing it to be a part of

the plan of the Deity, that good shall one day triumph over evil in this world, the best way of expecting the fulfilment of his purpose is to expect that every thing we now see in society, may be found capable of being bent to it, except vice itself, which must be broken. No other destruction, I humbly conceive, will be necessary. I think too He will work, as he always does, by means at once powerful and simple; and I do consider the gospel as the moral instrument to convert war into peace, confusion into order, avarice and cruelty into the love of God and man. It is quite equal to the task, and only requires uncontrolled sway. It asks no aid to its mighty yet innoxious arm; and least of all the aid of revolutions—instruments of working peculiarly opposite to its genius and character. Let its preachers therefore, in the meanwhile, be simple in their object and conduct; let them adhere close to their business:—thus it is, and thus only, that the world will be improved by them. I confess it has always appeared to me a descent from their high and honourable vocation, when, even in Europe, they have interfered in civil or political reforms.

LETTER VIII.

ON THE AFRICAN CHARACTER.

IN making a few cursory observations on the character of negroes, I do not mean to attempt a fine picture, nor to enlist fanciful description into the service of exciting sympathy. I am too sensible that in all countries, alas, a just opinion of human nature must be a very moderate one, to have the smallest inclination to sacrifice on this subject the truth of representation to the beauty of it. I wish to look at things as they are, and that not for the purpose of supporting theory of any sort, but of guiding practice.

The Mahomedan nations of Africa exhibit many symptoms of the turbulent spirit of that fierce faith. In the days of the British slave

trade, negroes from most of those tribes were not much coveted by judicious planters, and accordingly our slaves are chiefly from other nations. It is of the latter, therefore, that I shall treat.

The best mode of managing our enquiry I think, is to form a *comparative* estimate of these people,—and no comparison is so natural as with other heathen subjects of the British Crown—the population that fills our Asiatic dominions.

A certain peaceableness of disposition manifests itself in both races. But the unhappy antient institution of *castes* in India has impressed a fatal stamp on the character of the Hindoo. Fraud and duplicity have uniformly followed the deeply printed footsteps of that system down the dark course of ages. The mildness of the African, on the other hand, is accompanied with a certain mixture both of frankness and firmness in his character. In the one class the original law of self-preservation has been perverted into such a degree of selfishness as often produces indifference even to blood relations—to parents and children. In the other the charities of life natural to the human bosom,

have received no check from artificial institutions;—tender love of offspring, duty to parents, and respect to old age, are common virtues in Africa. Qualities such as these are what we should expect from the account which travellers give us of the state of society in many parts of the interior of that great continent; master and slave being found labouring together on the same piece of ground and eating together of the same mess. The instances of cunning we meet with in negroes in the West Indies are, I think, rather a confirmation than refutation of these views; slavery there is a sort of *caste*. What is worse, the evil is not curable in the colonial system as at present constituted; though it may, by wise management, be a good deal alleviated. But who has not read with interest, Park's account of the African mother, who, lamenting the death of her son, consoled herself, by the reflection that he had never told an untruth? I have already observed that I mean not to be the professed eulogist of the negro race—though I must say, that if any class of men have often been found mild yet not deceitful—if often firm and faithful, there is a something in

those qualities which pleads for liberal treatment. I shall by and by shew that there is a something else which makes it our wisdom to listen to the plea for our own sakes.

In one point the two races I have compared seem to agree—a willingness to be subject to Europeans as long as they are well used by them. This disposition to tame submission and dependence seems to arise partly from that natural indolence which is the effect of climate, that paucity of wants which is the school of any thing but exertion, that love of ease which damps the spirit of resistance ; and partly from the habit, in which all the present generations and their fathers have spent their lives, of seeing and feeling our superiority in arms, in arts, in science.*

* Will a familiar instance of this dominion of opinion be excused? It happened very lately in the West Indies. An acquaintance of mine erected a steam engine on his sugar plantation. One of his negroes soon after met a countryman and old friend belonging to a part of the colony where wind-mills and water-mills were better known. “ Quashy,” said the negro, in his own dialect, “ stop till I tell you something. Ah! white man is the man ! You know when wind blow, he stop him ; he

The indolence which I have admitted to infect the mind of the negro, may seem at first sight not reconcileable with the firmness I attribute to him: nevertheless he shews both as occasions call for them. The first is his habit—the second needs to be roused; when roused, it

make him work. You see water run; you know he make him work. But, ah! that's nothing—that time the great smoke come out of the hot fire, he catch him! he make *him work too!*—Quashy joined in extolling the powers of “Buckra,” and promised to come, when he might be permitted, to see this new proof of them.

There are persons who fear that this ascendancy may be weakened by religious instruction. Men who have not studied religion have no standard whereby to judge of its nature or probable effects. European superiority will maintain itself as much as ever in civil matters, while the instruction in question will add another bond, and the strongest of all bonds, to the attachment which unites the servant to the master.

Let me say shortly here that I see no occasion for making the art of writing any part of the instruction of negroes. They ought to be taught to read, that they may be able to profit by the scriptures; but the two objects, although united in this country, have no necessary connexion in themselves. The former would really, in the present state of slavery, do the people no service. It is not the communicating but the receiving of ideas that they stand in need of. “That the soul be without knowledge,” says

clearly manifests itself. Let colonists, as wise men, look to this : it may be called sullenness—it may be abused as obstinacy :—I have disclaimed standing on names or descriptions ; but I point to a strong quality which may be our friend or our enemy. Hardy endurance ; patience under privations and sufferings ; fidelity to friends such as cannot be shaken, no not by torture itself ; inflexible adherence to an object once thoroughly determined on ;—are such characteristics as these to be trifled with or disregarded ? What is wanting to give them at any time a dangerous direction, but the enterprise and organization of a certain number of daring and desperate spirits ?

. I am not an alarmist : I think those men are most apt to be so who are most conscious of the guilt of oppression. But I think it wise

the sacred penman, “ is not good.” But that it is not good that the mind of untutored man be without the secret of sending its thoughts of whatever sort to a distance, does not follow the inspired maxim : on the contrary, the “ knowledge ” must be implanted before the thoughts can be worthy, or perhaps safe, to be spread abroad. I believe some of the southern states of America permit reading, but not writing, to be taught their slaves.

in us to study the character of our population, and if there are any latent principles in it which ought to be kept in a quiescent or friendly state, not to call them into action against us. Happily we have much in their character to assist us in this important matter, if we will only make use of it.

I repeat that in my humble opinion the negro race are, generally speaking, quite willing to submit to our government, if we will only exercise it in moderation and gentleness. I conceive that it is by mistake that we think of our slaves as of ourselves, and imagine that their hearts are ever burning with thoughts about dependence or independence—thoughts by which, on the contrary, I believe their bosoms would seldom be visited, if we would only do our parts to make them the abodes of contentment and happiness. We may, indeed, goad men to rebellion by severity. Iron itself is not so hard a substance, but that a bar of the thickest steel, if acted on by a proportionate pressure at one end, will spring up at the other. Indeed I think it is a wonder we have not oftener produced such an effect on our slaves by

those fits of harshness which generally, and very unnecessarily accompany our fits of terror. Not seldom has the negro been called to shew his patience in the midst of additional endurance, hoping that "master" will return to more quiet in his own mind, and more reasonableness towards him. It is no wonder that some violent and cruel men are at times troubled with both waking and sleeping dreams of tumult and horror. But that the fiery spirit of re-action, of which they are so much afraid, and which they do so much, first to create, and then to stir, is really a very dormant principle, we have had more and more proof every day since the abolition of the slave trade : we have only to use the wisdom and discretion of permitting and encouraging it to lie dormant,

West Indians often shew a good deal of inconsistency in this matter. Very generally they pay a sort of unconscious but striking compliment to the good nature and fidelity of their negroes. Seldom does a white man on a plantation lock his door at night : I don't recollect ever sleeping any where in the West Indies where I observed any very particular

attention paid to a precaution so necessary in Europe.

A similar pledge of a quiet spirit appears in a great and important matter; the state of Jamaica since the revolution in the neighbouring colony of St. Domingo. The white people have often betrayed much alarm: a periodical return of panic seems to afflict them at the present moment; but there appears to have been little or no ferment of any other kind: the negroes seem to have remained all along in much quietness and peace.

Let me not be mistaken; I do not mean that there ought not to be a watchful police in the West Indies. Where is the country where this is not proper for its security? A single restless spirit or two may attempt to raise mischief anywhere. But there is no occasion for perpetual fright;—even if there were, there is no wisdom in betraying it. As the whites must be their own police, let them be always on the alert; but let them never strongly or violently seem to be so.—Let them know their negroes perfectly; and if any thing arises to be informed of, information will hardly ever fail to come to

some quarter : probably to some of those good and moderate masters who are the best security of the colonies. When it comes, let it be discreetly acted on ;—promptitude, calmness, and firmness, will have no need of the assistance of bloody-mindedness :—if crime is really discovered, let a fair trial and a wise and temperate punishment, assert, in an adequate manner, the rights of law and order. Above all, let white men continually guard their own spirits ; and then there will not take place one in a thousand of the provocations to insubordination, which are too constantly doing their utmost to act like the spark in the tinder box. Let them extend the Christian instruction, of which some people may be tired of hearing, but which cannot be too often recommended. It is a remarkable fact, that this great mean of peace and order, has met with little encouragement in Barbadoes, that recent scene of alarm and blood.* If I am

* That is, negro blood, shed certainly in no small quantity.—I readily admit that an insurrection, however originating, is an evil not to be trifled with ; but Barbadoes is so open a country, and so populous in whites, that a revolt there seems to imply in its nature no great difficulty in the capture of almost every one of the

rightly informed, not a single Methodist Missionary was in the island at the time the unhappy insurrection took place. What a contrast to Antigua, and to the sentiments of the inhabitants of Antigua, upon that very occasion, as quoted in a former letter!

Fear and cruelty go hand in hand. They would both be dismissed for ever from the government of negroes, if wisdom might once be permitted to take the place of both, which she is abundantly qualified to fill. The first is

deluded insurgents. It were to be wished that this had been the result on this occasion. The writer of one of the earliest published accounts of the insurrection, after mentioning that a great number of negroes had been killed, added that, happily, so far as he had then learned, there had been no *lives* lost! I fear the tide of old West Indian ideas runs very strong in this ancient colony.—I should be glad to be convinced of being in a mistake

I have never exactly learned how far, or in what manner, any white people suffered personally. Indeed it is singular how mysteriously the whole unhappy affair seems hastening into oblivion at a time when writers on the colonial side, some avowed, some anonymous, are saying so much about things far less important. Can there be any consciousness about the causes, circumstances, or termination, of the event that makes silence the best argument for them upon it?

always injurious, the second utterly unnecessary, in managing large bodies of men : but the admission of them is the natural error of inexperience ; and the command of negroes is too often given to very young men, who suppose that command can never mean any thing but agitation and harshness. I have often thought it would be a good thing if our young planters could get a little training in the army : they would there learn, that firmness and impartiality, command of temper, and, though last not least, regular example, are the secrets of discipline.

I visited once a plantation where a new attorney had lately been appointed. Two negroes, on two succeeding days, disobeyed the manager and some of the overseers. One of them, who happened to be a watchman, brandished his cutlass when he was about to be seized ; and it cost the manager, who behaved with coolness and propriety, some trouble, and the procuring of a little assistance, to wrest the weapon from him. I have seen times and places in the West Indies, in which no small consequences might have followed such an affair. A cutlass in the hands of a rebellious negro !

The daring mutineer struggling personally with the manager! Nothing less than a general insurrection in the colony would have been apprehended, nor any thing short of an application to the governor resorted to. The affair was certainly unpleasant, but it did not seem to the attorney to be so serious. "There is nothing very unnatural or extraordinary," he said, "in a body of either slaves or schoolboys wishing to try the mettle of a new master. We must neither burn them alive, nor yet appear to them to think lightly of the spirit of the attempt." After close separate confinement for a day or two, the offenders were brought formally to trial, in presence of the gang. The white men were publicly examined, and the culprits allowed to speak for themselves. They of course did not attempt to make much defence, and sentence was pronounced and immediately executed. Thirty nine lashes were inflicted on the principal offender; the other, on account of some circumstances, was excused about half the number: the whole punishment was made rather a matter of solemnity than severity. Never was there a plantation in more perfect

subordination than this estate continued ever afterwards, during my residence near it ; and I used to remark, when I paid a visit there, that the two *rebels*, whose faces I recollected, were not only obedient, but took every opportunity of distinguishing themselves by peculiar obsequiousness. As the attorney had conjectured, the affair was a mere experiment—it failed—and the people were perfectly satisfied.

In short, the character of the race that West Indians have to rule, calls for no quality in ruling them so much as self-command. A general habit, among colonists, of controuling their own spirits, would be worth nine-tenths of the militia force :—but this is too little studied. What imprudent conversation often goes on at table in the presence of domestic slaves ! What improper articles frequently appear in the colonial newspapers before the eyes of the free black and coloured people ! At one time, perhaps, for the sake of publishing an attack on religious instruction, it is associated, as unsafely as falsely, with every revolutionary object ; at another, for some reason utterly incomprehensible, a full detail is given of the grandeur of the kingdom

and court of Hayti! I do not mean, that fear and jealousy are to regulate all our actions and embitter our lives ; but I am clear that prudence ought to be made use of, more than it is, to restrain *temper*.

I have heard of a planter who named one of his drivers Wilberforce. It might no doubt be a vast gratification to the elegant mind of this gentleman to unite the sound of this name with the sound of the lash, and perhaps to take care that the punishments inflicted by this agent of his power should be more severe than those of any other. But what would have been said by him if a stranger (a Missionary for instance) had taken frequent opportunities to say to his negroes, "Good people, I am afraid you endure much tyranny ; but if so, there are persons of importance in England, the country we all belong to, who are very desirous to relieve you from it?" Yet such was the proclamation which this most witty and most wise proprietor of slaves did, himself, virtually make among them all, every time that with stern sneer he bawled on this executioner to fulfil his revolting commands.

Another instance of this sort is better known in a case unhappily far more important. The insurrection in Barbadoes is generally attributed to the negroes having supposed that Registry meant Emancipation. Their legislature are now making a registry themselves,—they early declared it to be a good measure, if only taken out of the hands of Britain,—the negroes accordingly now see what it always meant. Why was not this simple demonstration resorted to at first? Might it not have been wise to make the two-fold experiment, whether an insurrection might not thereby be avoided, and whether the argument maintained by the colony with the mother country in claiming that the legislative act should emanate from herself, would not rather have been strengthened than impaired by such promptitude? If this, however, would have been too much condescension for “Little England,” might not her white people have explained to the negroes not to expect freedom from the very thing which was to be a record of their names as slaves? If even this would have been too much, might not individuals at least have refrained from indulging in

presence of the blacks, in those philippics against the English which sanctioned and strengthened the absurdity? No,—nothing of all this could be done:—an important cause prevented, too important to be sacrificed,—they were angry.

The character of our negroes has naturally led me to descant a little upon the unsuitable conduct often exhibited by their rulers. The remarks are not foreign to my subject; for the behaviour of the master has been the occasion of strikingly manifesting, as it has severely tried, the disposition of the slave. If the mind of the negro were not cast in the mould I have represented, the consequence of our own proceedings in past times would have been that we should have had not merely an insurrection to record now and then, but the bloody scene to bewail every year in almost every colony. The future, I cannot help thinking, may be made to contain at once more exterior tranquillity, and more substantial safety, if we chuse. There is one maxim on this head, with the notice of which the subject shall be concluded. Slaves are not fond of seeing favourites round a master.

A system of favouritism too frequently prevails ; it is always bad,—sometimes the consequences have been very mischievous. Domestics may be made use of without being spoiled. When spoiled they have often proved ungrateful:—this is not an evil peculiar to the African mind ; it is in human nature, especially when uninstructed in real good principles. Let a man make *all* his negroes his study and his object, and he will find that nothing can exceed their attachment and subordination.

I have spoken of the blacks. Of the people of colour I do not speak. This is a different subject indeed. We have given them English blood, English ideas, and I am sorry to add, we have not always endeavoured to infuse into them the best of English principle. We have given them strong cause of quarrel with our colonial dominion. It must be said in their favour, by all mankind, that their peaceable conduct in our islands is much to their praise. I hope they will continue to possess this merit. I hope also that few will be the legislatures who will persist in extending to this class of people the difficulty of manumissions animadverted on

in my last Letter. I do not now speak of the policy in question as unnatural, but unwise—so unwise, that I humbly confess it appears to me that such a system, if generally adopted, would be little short of insanity. I can imagine that if a fiend were asked for a plan to entice quiet blacks into rebellion, he would say, “Send among them a certain number of mulattoes, slaves like themselves; the leaven of unwilling and indignant slavery will work in the midst of the willing, and your mass of rage and revenge will be ample enough.” Whatever policy we pursue with our coloured people, let us be wise enough not to adopt this. But let us be wiser still. For their sakes, for our sakes, in the name of wisdom and common sense, let us no longer increase their numbers. There is one way of avoiding this evil, and only one. I know no subject more important for the consideration of our colonial legislatures than this;—but I shall add nothing to the observations I made on it in my two last Letters.

LETTER IX.

ON THE POWER OF THE BRITISH MORTGAGEE.

I TRUST that what has been written may not appear either extravagant or dangerous. There are men in the West Indies well able to enter into these important subjects, and capable of wisely acting on them:—Why do they not generally give them their dispassionate and enlightened consideration? How does it happen that among West Indian proprietors we find men of liberal education, cultivated understanding, and extensive knowledge of the world, applying those advantages to all subjects, except those connected with the country where their property lies; that upon those subjects we find them uniting themselves in the most unqualified manner with men whose limited opportunities

have necessarily led them into contracted views, and permitting such views to influence them in discussions, the very nature of which forbids that a contracted view can possibly be a just one ?

The solution of the problem is not difficult;—it is, alas! too obvious. Self-interest is a strong principle in all men ; and, though it be often mistaken in the course it takes, as I think it is in the present matter, yet it does not in such a case act the less strongly. In the West Indies it sways its power in a very absolute manner, from the circumstance of so many colonists being merely temporary inhabitants of the country, not living in it as their home, but regarding it as a field where they are to find riches as rapidly as possible, and from whence they are to bring away their fortune to enjoy it in England. The general prevalence of such views must act strongly against the establishment of any wise and permanent system in any country, and against the disposition of men to apply their minds to the formation of any such system.

But there is another evil which operates still more against the West Indies, and that is the influence of mortgagees and great merchants ;—

men, who hardly ever pay the country a short visit, who have neither land nor negroes perhaps of their own, but who hold both in the strong and iron grasp of mortgage. If any influence is enough to blast the prosperity of any country, (I mean that sort of solid prosperity in which the future is wisely considered along with the present,) it is a cold withering influence like this, acting from a distant quarter, and used for no purpose but that of the passing moment.

I allude here, not so much to the power of the private creditor, as to that of the great mercantile mortgagee, who has secured to himself, as the condition of his loan, the consignments of the estate : a condition by which he holds the West India debtor completely within his grasp.

As a friend to the mercantile system, I always regret when I see any facts tending to confirm those unfavourable opinions of it, which were delivered to the world by Adam Smith. Undoubtedly, many merchants maintain in their minds, and exemplify in their conduct, a successful combat with what he considers the natural and necessary tendencies of trade ; and one is sometimes ready to consider the exception which

he takes to that most useful and necessary profession, as one of those weaknesses which often seem the diseases of great minds. Indeed the philosopher had probably no conception of the approach of such an improvement in this respect as certainly does distinguish our own times. It is a noble and gratifying spectacle to behold the great mercantile men of this great mercantile kingdom, devoting, as we so often in the present days, see them do, even the hours of business, to the direction of various institutions, whose object is the moral and intellectual advancement of their country ;—and, not of their own country only, but of the human race. Yet if there is any one branch of commerce which ever supported more strongly than another, or which still supports, the sentiments of the celebrated writer I have named, it is West India business.

A merchant advances a loan of money to a planter, in hopes of having a good annual return by commissions on the consignments. He does not, however, wish his capital to be locked up for an indefinite time, nor does the other desire to be long in debt ; it is therefore the object of

both lender and borrower, that the money shall be, if possible, restored by a certain limited period. This great object is to be attained by the labour of men and women in a state of slavery ; and slavery to whom ? To the *two parties*. Is there not enough in this circumstance to lead any thinking man to fear beforehand, that whatever else the contract may produce, it will tend to produce evil to those beings ? Too often, it does produce great evil.—By the existence of a master's creditor, the negro acquires, unhappily, an additional and a temporary master ;—one who does not know him, does not see him, feels himself no ways bound to take any charge of him. The attention which, perhaps, his owner would be disposed to pay to him, is embarrassed and hampered : the creditor is the master's master ; he lives thousands of miles from the habitation of the labourer, and often the debtor dies before the debt is paid. It is, perhaps, too much to expect of human nature that, in such circumstances, a mercantile house shall take fully upon them the parental duties which the real owner has crippled himself from performing, or has been prevented by

death from resuming. Accordingly, to say the truth, those merchants who are mortgagees upon estates, are seldom guilty of the affectation of pretending that they think much about the matter. Necessaries, no doubt, must be supplied to the people, that the produce may be raised : their thoughts go thus far ; and all the business relating to this object is regularly attended to. But any expressions of peculiar interest in the feelings, comforts, or instruction of negroes, would be deemed unbusiness-like language in the letter-book of a counting-house. Even the increase of the population of the estate is not a concern of the merchant's ; he hopes to get paid before the period comes round in which so remote a benefit can operate. In fact, his interest pulls in an opposite direction to the real permanent interest of the landholder. How blacks shall become thriving, mulattoes virtuous, and both happy, are really questions not belonging to the Royal Exchange.—Consignments and commissions are concerns better understood there.—Every thing is well in its place ; and, I only regret, that ever British commerce stained its hands with the holding of human

beings as goods and chattels. If any merchant feels disposed to tell me I do him injustice in considering him as looking little to any consequences of his contracts, except those of a pecuniary nature, I am willing and indeed glad to be set right by him. But I must, in reply, ask him, whether every thought that crosses his mind on the subject does not make it become the theatre of contention between two interests diametrically opposed.—Rapid returns are the life of trade. Slow and distant, though sure success is the object of truly wise plantership, and the nurse of Creole population.

This contrast is the more unhappy, because of the powerful command which the mercantile body take in colonial affairs. It is surprising to observe how much even independent proprietors allow themselves to be guided by them.—But truly the number of proprietors is very small who enjoy absolute independence. Even with rich planters there is generally some new purchase in treaty, or some other scheme in view, which renders a credit on England desirable. Nay, wealthy colonists are generally a sort of merchants themselves, and there is

with them much of the *esprit du corps*. The love of immediate gain has too much power over them; it blinds them too much to considerations of which otherwise they would see and admit the importance. As to those planters who have been less successful, they are completely under bondage to their mortgagees. They are desirous to appease, and indeed to be rid of them; and they yield to this desire till they shut their eyes to every other object, and almost unconsciously forget every other principle. The great questions which sometimes cross their minds respecting the rational creatures who yield them the sweat of their brows; whether justice has always been done the negro in the scale of existence; if not, whether they themselves are now fulfilling the whole duty they owe him in respect of body, and in respect of mind: all such questions they satisfy shortly by the recollection of their *debts*; these they must pay in the first place; "it is a point of conscience with them:" they will perhaps say, "they are bound to it by every law human and divine." It is enough; the plea is accepted in the court where it is offered. Thus, the mora:

enlightened planter, to whose judgment certainly much weight would be due on every general subject relating to the state of society in the colonies, if he maintained his own superiority, and acted up to his light, sinks himself to the level of the ordinary white creole. Being unhappily led by personal interest and pecuniary views, either to be silent, or to join in the cry which other colonists raise against both the need and the possibility of amelioration, he loses the credit which belongs to him, and he justly loses it, for abandoning the important post which was assigned him, and of which the determined occupancy might have given him a degree of command equally extensive and useful in colonial affairs.

Since the power of the mercantile body is so great, it would be liberal conduct, and truly becoming British Merchants, to use that power for lessening to the utmost the evils of the colonial system. I doubt not they would do so, if those evils existed nearer to their door, and more before their eyes. But it would be well to recollect that grievances are not the less real for being distant and unseen. Let merchants

break through the rules of trade, and act on great principles.—Let them consider the estates of their debtors as it would be their duty to do their own, in every thing in which the labourer is concerned, and when *his* benefit would be furthered by delaying to demand payment of the debts, let them pride themselves in making this noble use of their capital. Some of them will be apt to remark that they have been compelled to submit to much delay already. This may be very true, because often their debtors cannot pay them after harassing both themselves and their negroes. But an avowed plan of willing postponement on the part of the creditor might often yield to all parties a benefit, which, without it, never can be obtained. They may further object that the hardship of such a plan would be great.—This is often equally true. Undoubtedly, the advances of the merchants are frequently exceedingly heavy; and indeed, there never perhaps was contrived among mankind a system more unhappy and ruinous to all the parties concerned in it, than what the unbounded loans of England to the colonies constantly tend to prove, to both the mercantile

and the planting speculator. But the evil being done, the only question now is, as to the best way of getting out of it. And here it is that the peculiar principles of commerce unfortunately, in general, prevail, and those of liberality, and indeed true wisdom, are too much sacrificed.

Any very general change in mercantile habits, must be, I fear, a hopeless expectation. It is time, therefore, for every moderate and wise man among proprietors of land in the colonies, to consider whether there is not too much commercial influence and sway in the whole course of colonial affairs. It is full time for the planter to assume his own place, to take the lead of his mercantile correspondent, and if necessary, tell him plainly, at all hazards, that permanent interests must no longer be sacrificed to those merely temporary. Is the planter in debt?—Let him sit down and consider who are his different creditors, and what is the nature of their respective claims. *His first creditor is his negro.* Yes, whatever money he may owe, and whatever means he may possess, or may not possess, of paying it, the chief and the pre-

ferable debt which justice and morality bind him to satisfy, is to the *man* to whom he stands in the singular relation of owner—and this preferable claim extends not only to what are called necessities, a term equally vague and harsh—but to the various comforts which belong to a human being, as such, and to all his family.

It is too true that the stream of the West Indian system is so strong, that when an individual colonist wishes to get out of it, he feels himself unable and unsupported—he can hardly avoid being carried down by its force. The struggle is often a painful one, and it is sometimes interesting to witness it. A young proprietor, perhaps, goes out to take charge of his affairs. Although he should not have the misfortune of meeting with a Hodge or a Huggins in his neighbourhood, he must see continually much before him and around him, which, with British feelings and ideas, he cannot cease to deplore. But his inexperienced years do not warrant him to speak, and his private station does not entitle him to be heard. Nor can he even act as he would wish in his own affairs, or with the negroes who are called his own. Pos-

sibly the property may be a family one, or an old partnership concern; at any rate, in all probability, it is in debt. Thus he is embarrassed by much responsibility to joint-owners, or creditors, or both, and cannot venture on modes of management not sanctioned by his neighbours. Meanwhile, whether he remains in his own abode, or visits other colonies, he is surrounded by kindness and hospitality. These are the virtues of the West Indies, and worthless would be his heart if it were not impressed by them. Now is the time of danger. Often he feels himself overwhelmed, and content to make the best, and to *think the best* of a state of things which he cannot alter, and from which he cannot escape. Again he remembers Britain; the strife is renewed in his bosom; he considers the maintaining of it as a tribute he must pay to her as long as he shall be absent, and he determines to keep alive his best feelings and most valuable principles. Too many get tired of the conflict; indeed the greater number yield very early. But there are individuals who maintain the struggle through a residence of many years, and others are brought back to former views by

reading and reflection. I sometimes think the abolitionists at home do not sufficiently know these persons,—perhaps the latter do not enough make themselves known. To a certain degree, undoubtedly, they are overawed by the majority around them.

If proprietors feel themselves in such circumstances, if debtors can find no escape from them, *Managers, Overseers, Book-keepers, &c.* are of necessity entirely under their influence. These men's advancement depends upon their character, and that character is a thing wholly formed and moulded according to those notions of proper management which have obtained general sanction and establishment. Thus through all classes and situations is felt the strength of the prevailing system.

Whether this giant stands stronger on the foot which supports him on the other side of the Atlantic, or on that which he has planted in this country, it is not easy to determine. This is plain, that there is only one power which can raise itself up against his colossal magnitude; and that power is the public of Britain. Hence the absolute necessity of that interference, which the

prominent members of the West India body so strongly deprecate. It *must* act; and that not by fits and starts, but steadily and perseveringly. Nothing else will impress upon colonists the principles which ought to guide them;—nothing else can support them against the influence at home, which would crush all those principles that are branded and stigmatised as new. This overweening influence is wholly exercised by a comparatively small number of individuals, to whom is due the immense debt owing by the colonies to the mother country;—many of the mortgages purchased at a very small proportion of the principal sums, after perhaps much of the interest too has been a total loss. Let it not be said, that it would be unjust to deprive the creditor of the legitimate influence he possesses over his debtor; for, in the manner in which the power in question is exercised, it does not touch the debtor alone (whose person and goods, by all means, let the creditor take and make the most of), but it touches also, and *chiefly*, multitudes of innocent individuals, and new generations of them continually. Let not justice be talked of by men

who would decide a cause by summoning two parties only to appear in court, although there are three parties concerned in it. The third, and the helpless party has been hitherto forgotten; and he has no counsel to take up his interest, if the public of England do not. Besides, there would be neither injury nor damage sustained by the British West India body, although they should be somewhat silenced. They could not, collectively considered, make out even the lowest claim or the weakest case, the case of *damnum sine injuria*. Can their voice, however loud, *create* by a miracle the payment it craves? Speculation has thrown sums of money into the "vasty deep." Become untangible, like the "spirits" there, they may, like them, be called—

"But will they come, if thou dost call for them?"

If means are necessarily futile, there is no loss in being hindered from using them. Nay, there must be, in a large and general sense, a benefit in being compelled to abandon a system which ages and generations have proved to be as disadvantageous to the creditor as to

the debtor. How many fortunes, made in other branches of commerce, have been sunk in West India property! How much bankruptcy in England, and depopulation in the West Indies, may be viewed as upbraiding each other with misery, mutually produced and mutually suffered!—If a statistical account could possibly be made up of such past events, as they happened, what an interesting and woful record it would be! In many cases, the abridging the power and terror of the mortgage might have prevented the depopulation, and thus have preserved the creditor himself from ruin. To prevent such evils in future, is the imperious duty both of the colonies and of the mother country. It is not for me to propose laws—indeed laws alone are not sufficient; there must be a change of ideas, feelings, and habits in the majority of the parties concerned; and public opinion must never cease to act, till this change is accomplished. Yet some laws, in the meantime, would do much good; and nothing is more important than that enlightened West Indians and colonial legislatures should discuss, with the British government and parliament, in what

manner the negro can be preserved from suffering by the misfortunes or mismanagement of the master, and the oppression, often not known or directly intended, of the master's distant creditor. I am sure there are British merchants who would give their aid in such an object. I think if it were properly laid before them, the greater number would. But even supposing that not a single one were willing to grant relief, every one ought to be compelled. The labourer is the main-spring of all movement in the colonial machine ; and to save him at once to himself, to the owner, and to the creditor, is not undue interference—it is an act of wisdom, justice, necessity, for all parties. I am willing, therefore, to look in the face all the objections that may be made to even the strongest regulations in his favour. I do not think colonists in general are to be charged with a wish to avoid paying their debts. But even if abuses of this kind were to follow new laws and customs, these ought still to take effect. If evil must happen, I say it broadly, and I ask if any Briton will hesitate to join me, *better a fraudulent debtor be*

protected, than a human being sacrificed. How much stronger then is the case, when, in studying the benefit of the negro, his health, vigour, morals, and comfort of every kind, you give him that prolonged life which secures the property of the creditor himself! In so far as the systems of mortgage or merchandise, or both united, oppose such obvious and important principles, the whole world will agree that it ought to be put an end to.

This topic is closely connected with the matter I touched on slightly in my fourth letter, as the first evil that strikes the view in British colonial bondage. I have made it the special subject with which I am to conclude, because it not only abounds with direct mischiefs itself, but is evidently to be considered as lying at the root of every affliction the negro race has endured in our colonies. It extends its ramifications over the whole colonial system; which circumstance has led me into some general observations on that system in this letter. When the same spirit of commerce which first brought labourers to the West Indies, hangs over their existence there so unceasingly, that

they and their children continue to be classed with common chattels, lodged for the security of debt, it is impossible, in the nature of things, but that all those habits and feelings should ensue, which call so loudly for amendment.

I wish I could contemplate, with strong hope, the rising generation of planters as willing to listen to the call, or likely to consider in that serious manner which the momentous question demands, how that legal relief is to be wisely and prudently administered, whereof the negro stands so urgently in need; and which would spread the happiest consequences over every part of colonial affairs. In those affairs things cannot remain much longer as they are:—dispassionate men are strongly impressed with this conviction. Persons, therefore, to whom the tranquillity of the West Indies is dear, feel it impossible, without anxiety, to look forward to the future; or to think of the vast consequence attached to the formation of the characters of those men, in whose hands the lapse of a few years is to place the British West Indies. With a few observations, arising out of these feelings,

respecting the young community I have just alluded to, I shall come to a close.

I would earnestly request West Indians to weigh deeply the importance of promoting, not an increased repugnance, but a growing similarity of sentiment, between the inhabitants of the mother country and those of the colonies. If there is any value in this object, and surely there can be but one opinion here, the approximation must, to say no more, be at least mutual. To render young planters either desirous or capable of this, the *race must be improved*. I use this phrase in no party spirit; I deliver an opinion which I feel confident will be subscribed to by every enlightened proprietor in his calm moments. West India gentlemen, therefore, would do well to turn their personal and sedulous attention to an object lying at the root of all future hope. The situation of book-keeper or overseer ought to be made more desirable than it is for a well-behaved youth of education and good principles. The old maxim, that hardship is a good school, seems sometimes pushed too far in the West Indies. An inexperienced young man there, needs to be advised and

befriended, as well as disciplined ;—in some cases to have the power of the lordly manager over him abridged. He is often treated with that neglect and harshness which very possibly the other endured in his own day ; and which, according to an invariable law of nature, fit the sufferer to become a tyrant in his turn : thus the progeny of abuse grows up afresh from age to age.* If all were done that could easily be done, to cultivate the minds and elevate the characters of the rising generation at least, and the new comers, if not the present stock of the middling and lower classes of whites in the West Indies, our sons, if not ourselves, might behold in a new race of planters a body of men willing to remedy colonial evils, and able to control commercial abuses, both in the law and the practice of the country.

Finally, I would respectfully urge upon my brother colonists, (for I shall always, in recollection of some men I have known in the West Indies, regard colonists as my brethren and friends,) the consideration, that if their country

* In my remarks on managers, I speak with exceptions I have personally known.

demands of them a review and amendment of their system, it is no more than she has done with their fellow subjects in other parts of her foreign dominions. It is only lately, that she discovered and rectified a mistake she long permitted to prevail in her government of India. In former times, young men went out to the East, ignorant, in a great degree, respecting the vast concerns that were to be placed in their hands, and often found themselves the judges and legislators of the provinces of an extensive empire, while yet novices in the principles on which the affairs of those millions of people were properly to be conducted. Now they are not permitted to aspire to such important functions without due preparation, nor even to go out to the territory untrained. They thought formerly, as young West Indians do still, of nothing but amassing a fortune ; and bestowed little consideration on the interests of the countries and the inhabitants that were to minister to their ambition. Now those great interests are made the principal part of their study ; and though personal hopes are still, of course, allowed to stimulate them, they find they must

think of other men as well as themselves ; and, following a certain track prescribed to them, show themselves worthy of success, before they are suffered to attain to it. In the English Western world, the spirit of a Wellesley is to this hour wanting in all the local legislatures. Those bodies see fresh accessions of young men arrive every year from home, and allow them to spread over all the colonies, without a single idea being presented to their raw minds of the important charge they are destined to undertake, and the qualifications necessary for its due exercise. The very name of the profession bespeaks the highest object to which their thoughts are directed ; they come to be *planters* ; to dig in the earth ; to keep their eyes fastened on the prone object, nor ever raise a look, except in the idea of returning home with the fruits. Why are they not instructed what their business is to be, and how they are to address themselves to the successful conducting of it ? That business is to GOVERN MEN ; not free men, indeed, as in India, but still men :—it is to share the rule and direction of a large portion of the human race ;—it is to take that peculiar and

intimate charge of them, which is rendered needful by the circumstances of bondage itself, and with care and pains to train them in a course of good order and happiness united with industry. These are the great ideas which ought to be continually held out to the young colonist ; which ought to fill his mind from the first moment of his projected embarkation from his native country, and to swell in importance before his eyes during the whole of his colonial career. On his success, in making the people under him at once happy and orderly, ought to be made perpetually dependent all hope of success in making himself rich. Colleges are not necessary to instil these principles.* What is chiefly wanting is, that legislatures and individual proprietors shall turn their own minds to the deep and constant study of the great subjects relating to their negroes ; the inferior whites will then naturally receive the impression. Britain has called upon them all to consider more maturely, and to fulfil more appropriately,

* Yet some sort of seminary of education for young planters might be of inestimable benefit in each colony : the late Mr. Steele, if I mistake not, suggested the plan in Barbadoes long ago.

than they have hitherto done, the arduous duties lying upon them. What means are to be taken to render obedience to a call of such authority, it becomes the two former classes seriously to weigh. It depends on West Indians themselves, whether bondage under them may not be universally made the willing, useful, and quiet state of labourers, who, though slaves, may enjoy a real, though unconscious, protection as British subjects. It depends on them, whether peace and security may not rest firmly on the basis of this mutual protection and contentment. It depends on them, whether, instead of those disruptions and separations between England and her Caribbean dominions, which sometimes in the colonial controversy, are affected to be talked of as objects of fear, and, at other times, seem more plainly held out as engines of threat, there shall not rather be added strength to the ties, and increase to the value of the connection, which attaches to the mother country her western colonies. But if the majority of West Indians continue to treat all British discussion with resentment, nothing will ever follow, consistent with wisdom or productive of safety.

Let not, then, the hints here given, be thus angrily received; rather let them be calmly weighed and improved, notwithstanding the obscurity of the quarter from which they come. In a spirit of peace they are commended to the consideration and improvement of those readers, men, not wanting either among resident colonists, or Anglo West Indians, who are more capable, than the writer of these pages can pretend to be, to do justice to the momentous subject.

THE END.



NOTE

REFERRED TO IN THE

INTRODUCTION.

Containing Remarks on certain parts of a Pamphlet, published by Joseph Marryat, Esq. M. P. entitled, Examination of the Report of the Berbice Commissioners, &c.

1. MR. MARRYAT endeavours, by a series of inferences, to make his readers believe that no infants were reared under the Commission. The fact is, that, according to a list which has been carefully made up, *one hundred and seven* children were born, of whom twenty-three died, and *eighty-four were reared*. The statement presented to the House of Commons exhibited the *balance* of births over deaths, or of deaths over births, each year, on the respective properties; it did not contain the details of the account, but gave the results. If the deaths of adults which made room in the population for the above number of births, had not taken place, and the decrease of slaves, which elsewhere attracts Mr. M's animadversion, had been the *total gross* amount of the mortality, the estates, instead of being unhealthy, would have been healthy to a degree quite incredible; and if among nearly twelve hundred men and women, living together for four

years, there had been no children, there would have been such a miracle exhibited to the world as it never saw before. The author of the Examination, however, does not hesitate to build the whole of his triumph on these marvellous conclusions.

2. The same gentleman seems to suppose that as the decrease of population in 1814 was thirty, the year 1815 must have been little better, and that on this account the commissioners kept back the return for the latter year. The fact is, that, by an omission in Berbice, that document did not arrive in this country till after the Report was written. The decrease in that year was seventeen; it had been computed at fifteen. The return for 1816 has been also received; that is to say, up to the end of July, when the estates were surrendered to the Dutch association, and the decrease for those seven months upon all the properties taken together was exactly ONE! Had not the above change taken place, it surely is not too much to say, that a population which had been originally received very full of invalids had now probably reached its lowest point, and that a commencement of *increase* would, in all likelihood, have appeared in 1817. On one of the estates, Sandvoort, the births had for some time exceeded the deaths.—It may be just remarked, in so many words, before leaving this topic, that Governor Gordon's statements, on which Mr. Marryat founds some calculations respecting the former population, contain important errors; the rectifying of which would exhibit a result materially different: but, neither do the objects of the present remarks require, nor their limits permit, these details to be entered into.

3. Mr. M. quotes a *part* of the returns of produce presented to parliament, to impress a belief that the crops were annually diminishing in the hands of the commissioners. The truth is, that

a statement of produce *received* from the West Indies in any particular year, does not give a correct idea of the produce *grown* that year; the voyage to Europe lies between; and this is liable to the control of many circumstances. In another part of the Examination this subject is dwelt on sufficiently to show that it did not escape notice, notwithstanding the contradictory use here made of the tables. The true comparison would be between the aggregate produce received during the whole existence of the commission and the aggregate produce of the four preceding years. But the writer has only to do with the year 1815; and so far from a diminution having taken place that year, the crop of coffee gathered on Sandvoort was the largest that had been known for a long period, proving finally 180,000 lb. weight.

4. The readers of the Examination are taught to infer that the properties were not indebted to the commissioners for any buildings or improvements. The following particulars will show what was done on two of the plantations.

ON DANKBAARHEID.

Besides great repairs to the boiling house and other parts of the works, to the negro houses, &c.

A row of new houses erected near the St. Jan line, for the negroes formerly belonging to St. Jan, and the Dageraad negroes.

A new hospital.

New mill work to the sugar mill, and a new water wheel.

One or two new sluices, besides repairs.

A large brick building of three stories, viz.

First story,—Prison of six cells, divided by brick walls.

Second story,—Chapel.

Third story,—Apartments for Overseers.

A *yaws* house, with a piece of ground inclosed by an extensive paling.

ON SANDVOORT.

Besides additions and a new roof to the dwelling-house, repairs to the other buildings and the sluices, and the almost entire renewal of the hospital.

A *yaws* house, as at Dankbaarheid.

A nursery.

A cattle-mill for stamping or peeling coffee, intended to supersede manual labour.

It ought not to escape observation that these ameliorations cost a considerable part of the debt incurred by the estates.

5. It is objected that too much time was allowed to the negroes for their own use. It must be conceded, that by a clerical error the case did not appear fairly. It had been stated that the negroes were allowed a day in each *week*, instead of a day in each *fortnight*, which was in fact the case; and which was no more than the laws of Jamaica allow. The day was fixed in the middle, in preference to the end, of every second week; in order to avoid the possibility of any of the disorders that are insinuated to have taken place. Of the correctness of these stories the writer must be excused for being a little incredulous, in reference to any period whatever; and he is willing to appeal to the whole colony whether any such thing happened in 1815. Perhaps there were few estates in the West Indies where more strict regulations existed, than those which were then established, respecting the use of this extra day. The overseers super-

intended the working of the negro grounds in the same manner as plantation labour; and a system of mutual assistance was established, (to which the industrious negroes were induced by compensations to agree) in order to render all the grounds equally productive. One trait of the negroes who experienced the benefit of these regulations, while they saw also the exertions that were made to extend the regular plantain walks of the estates, the writer cannot avoid mentioning. When some new fields from which plantains had been expected in succession, were retarded by the weather, in 1816, the people came to request that the purchases of plantains might not be renewed, and to offer rather to double their diligence during extra hours that they might subsist entirely on their own ground provisions. It is a pleasing circumstance that they have met their reward. The last twelve months and upwards have been one continued dry season in Berbice; a circumstance (happily rare) which has produced great scarcity. In the midst of the general distress the estates, it is understood, have uniformly enjoyed a supply of food.

6. On the subject of instruction the author of the Examination has given his opinion what *would be* the effect of that methodistical measure. What actually *was* the effect shall be stated without exaggeration; little indeed could be expected from the short time. Some attention was excited to the duties of married life, and to the other precepts of the scriptures; the usual riotous practices on holidays were abandoned by a considerable number of negroes; while they readily partook of the innocent festivity which was rather encouraged than disallowed; * church and school were well

* Extract of a letter from the Agent, dated 6th September, 1815.

* Holidays are occasionally allowed the negroes of the colony by

attended on all the estates, and particularly thriving in the town; attachment and obedience were manifested to the missionary and mistress, and much willing subordination to the agents. The negro clothing for the estates was made in the sewing school.

7. Much has been said on the subject of the negroes originally belonging to St. Jan, and afterwards removed to Dankbaarheid, not having been restored to their former domain; likewise on a similar topic, the occasional employment of the Winkel negroes* on Sandvoort. The truth of the first mentioned case is, that St. Jan and Dankbaarheid are in fact one large property: they are two contiguous lots: and the respective settlements having been originally placed very close to the mutual boundary line, they were within two or three gunshots of each other. It may be observed too, by the way, that the abandonment of St. Jan

authority. Saturday and Sunday week were given for this purpose. You know what sort of an affair is a negro dance of 48 hours with all its concomitants. Mr. and Mrs. Wray have long assiduously laboured at Sandvoort, and with some success, to wean the people from these practices. No change having been hitherto attempted at Dankbaarheid, I there invited the grown people to see the children dance in the hall on the Saturday:—some of the former were not hindered to join, as every propriety in dress and manner prevailed among the party. On Sunday I gave a dinner to the whole gang.—Nearly 450 sat down at five long tables under a shed; after first supplying the invalids in the hospital and negro houses. I need not give you the particulars of the feast; the main supply was a cow put into every form, of soup, (prepared in one of the large sugar boilers), of boiled meat, and baked meat; and the beverage was punch, rather palatable than strong. We had a little sacred music, such as we could make out; the words were good, if the harmony was not perfect. Next morning, Sampson, an old and leading negro, whom I had placed at the head of the centre table, came to me with the thanks of the plantation, saying, "They had never spent such happy holidays." The conduct of the people was quite orderly, and the sight was truly pleasant."

* The Winkels are an establishment of mechanics in the town of New Amsterdam.

was not a measure of the commissioners; it was among the last acts of their predecessor, Governor Gordon. This is merely mentioned because Mr. Marryat does not believe the commissioners on the subject; which, after rather more opportunity of judging, the writer most certainly does. But as to the act itself there may have been nothing wrong in it. It is only when the comforts of the negroes are not made a first consideration in effecting a change of residence, that that measure is a hardship upon them. Accordingly, the commissioners themselves, not long after, very properly abandoned Dageraad, (the estate which yielded their best sugar) because it was an unhealthy and laborious plantation. As to the employment of the Winkel negroes on Sandvoort, the distance of that plantation from their residence in town was only an hour's walk; and, in fact, in numerous cases of man and wife, the one slave belonged to the one property, the other to the other. When the writer of these lines went to Berbice, and saw among the Winkel people many negroes, not artizans, and especially numbers of females, leading an idle and consequently a vicious life in the towu, he felt convinced, that if the commissioners had been on the spot they would have perceived that the plan of giving these people agricultural occupation had been not too much but too little followed; he acted on this conviction, and without even any previous notice to his constituents, he carried that measure further than had ever been done. If there was crime here, he is more guilty still; for even with respect to the more distant plantations, a system of interchange of labour, not indeed compulsory, but voluntary, was established amongst them all. When the weather or other circumstances made it desirable on any of the properties to accelerate any piece of work, it was

proposed to the gangs to visit each other for a few weeks. The proposal was always welcomed as an indulgence, and every accommodation was provided for them. Emulation was excited, and much willing labour was procured; a proof of which was produced in the large crop of coffee before mentioned. Another object too was had in view. The young people of the different properties were made acquainted, and aid was thus given to the operation of the encouragements that were always held out to them to form permanent connections among themselves, in preference to desultory connections on other estates. These details will be forgiven by any man who reads the accusations which have been brought before the public so strongly and so unweariedly in successive pamphlets.

8. The expenses of management having been taken notice of in what has been printed on both sides, it may not be improper just to remark in a few words, that in 1815, they were much reduced. The united gangs of Dankbaarheid, Dageraad, and St. Jan, had been under two managers; a measure not altogether without consideration, for it involved the contentment of the negroes. Circumstances, however, enabled the agent at that period, to take them all under the charge of himself and one manager.—Another salary was saved by the assistant agent's residing at and managing Sandvoort. The two retrenchments amounted to 600*l.* sterling per annum.

9. It is remarked, that there is no account of produce from the Surinam estates; which is true. In the beginning of 1815, it appeared by the books and accounts presented to the agent, that they had been long deeply burthened with debts; and it was stated, that some creditors threatened to bring a part of them to sale.

10. A more interesting matter still respecting those properties, brought forward by the author of the examination, is a painful and strange tale of an act of cruelty committed by the person entrusted with the charge of them. It was never heard of either by the commissioners or the agent before. The only time the latter had it in his power to be in Surinam, was for a few days on his way out from England, a great part of which period he happened to be confined by illness. Mr. Bonté had been appointed by his predecessor, Mr. De la Court. Before renewing that person's powers, particular inquiries respecting his character were made, both of the governor and of various other gentlemen. Nothing wrong was learned of him. It must have been after this period that the circumstance, whatever it was, happened. If any account of it had ever reached Berbice, the agent or his assistant would have instantly gone up to enquire into it, and if correct, to supersede such a depute. The pressing state of the more extensive concerns at Berbice, prevented any early absence from them, except in a case of absolute necessity; and Surinam lying directly to windward, the two colonies, though contiguous on the map, have less communication with each other, than, perhaps, Europe has with either; a circumstance which however surprising it may appear in England, is familiar in the West Indies. But if Mr. Marryat's information has been correct, there is one inference to be drawn from it, which he does not seem to have perceived. As he will not probably allege, that Mr. Bonté was selected by the Commissioners as a known tyrannical character, or was instructed by them to practise cruelty, Mr. M's discovery makes against the sentiment which his writings seem intended to impress, that any and every West Indian, taken upon such

recommendations as can be got, will in all probability as a matter of course, be found quite humane in the management of negroes.

THAT such ideas on this subject are not very correct, is a truth which has met with sad proof since the delivery of the Berbice estates in the end of July, 1816. The commissioners and their agents had prophesied that the poor negroes would be subjected to cruel sufferings; which predictions have been treated in certain quarters as equally vain and uncharitable. It is not because recrimination is sought for, but because every instance of cruelty, not excluding the case of Bonté, is a fresh proof of the necessity of that engrafting of European ideas on the West Indies, which it was the very object of the commission to exemplify; it is, in short, because truth must be stated, however painful, that the reader must prepare for a tale by which his feelings will be harrowed up. Alas! there is too much ground to fear, that the case it exhibits, has not been the only instance in which that policy in conducting the estates, of which the *Berbice Gazette* "hailed the dawn" when the news of the treaty arrived,* has been replaced in all its power.

About the beginning of November, 1816, somewhat more than three months after the transfer of Sandvoort plantation, the manager, a Dutchman, was offended with the conduct of a female slave, of the name of America. The only account that has been

"*Berbice Gazette*, 6th January, 1816.

* "By the Barbadoes packet, we have received London papers to the 18th November, from which we subjoin extracts. Our readers will see by the

received of the offence was, that she was “ insolent to the manager’s wife.” The writer has a recollection of this negro woman, united with no recollection whatever of her being any other than quite an inoffensive and rather industrious creature. He is pretty confident she was never subjected to even the slightest confinement as a punishment, during his own administration: he believes he may say, during the whole duration of the commission. Humane West Indians know well that there is no point on which they and their neighbours so constantly differ, as on the meaning of the word insolence in a negroe. If a poor woman pleads, or even strongly remonstrates on occasion of a little daughter being whipped, they are not extremely ready to think that this crime is worthy of stripes. Reader, this manager was of a different opinion, and the number of lashes appropriated by him to the offence was ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY! The name of the wretch shall not be proclaimed by the writer; it would be unknown in this country; it stands on public record in the colony. After various difficulties and delays, he was brought to trial before the court of criminal justice, on the 23d August, 1817, and found guilty. The following passages are extracts from the address delivered to him, by Mr. Samuel, the president, previous to passing sentence:

“ You have been found guilty, after a most impartial and patient investigation, of excessive cruelty towards the female slave *America*, by punishing her in a most unmerciful manner, for a supposed offence, which, according to your own statement of it, was of no heinous nature; the circumstances of which you have

eleventh article of the commercial treaty with Holland, the colony estates are to revert to their former owners; and we hail with pleasure the dawn of another policy in conducting them for the general interest of the colony at large.”

not been able to describe ; and into the truth or falsehood of which you do not seem to have given yourself any pains to enquire ; an alleged offence, giving credit to your own relation, which sprang out of parental solicitude, and laying claim on that account, if it had been committed, to leniency and indulgence. So far from this circumstance having any weight with you, in the diminution of the punishment which you ordered to be inflicted on that unhappy woman, it appears to have been entirely overlooked, or only to have provoked additional injustice, or to have excited a greater degree of vengeance towards the sufferer.

“ From all the evidence, worthy of belief, on this prosecution, it is clearly and incontrovertibly shewn, that this unfortunate female, supposed by the whole gang to be in a state to interest every manly heart about her, was brought to the stake by your orders, and there fastened without further form or ceremony to the rings for the purpose of being whipped, she herself soliciting the while, with reiterated cries and increasing energy, to be heard in her defence ; to which cries you turned not only a deaf ear, but unfeelingly and most unjustly answered, ‘ that you would hear her after she had received her punishment.’

“ In this way you commenced this flagrant act of injustice, which ended not until after you had inflicted, with insatiable cruelty, on the suffering body of this bound and unresisting female, *one hundred and seventy lashes* with the cart whip, a measure of punishment far exceeding the limit of the law, and applicable only, after solemn enquiry before this court, to a most atrocious case.”

The address then takes notice of what seems to have been an attempt at subornation of perjury.

It next details, that this man “ not only refused to hear the

unhappy woman," "and inflicted the severe punishment without cause," ("I say without cause," repeats the judge, "because you have made none apparent to the court") but that he coolly and deliberately smoked his pipe "during the long interval of the sufferings, the unjust sufferings of a weak and prostrate fellow creature, not allowing the selfish indulgence to be interrupted until the wretched sufferer had received ninety-five lashes." It proceeds, "when you took the pipe from your lips to insult her in her suffering, by reproaching her with her imagined but unsubstantiated offence, and then proceeded to finish the work of your barbarity, by ordering to be joined to the number of lashes which she had already received, seventy-five additional stripes. And you had afterwards the impudence to boast in European society, on being taxed with the infliction of an illegal punishment, that you had given a *Dutch thirty-nine*, thereby inferring, notwithstanding your attempt to pervert or fritter away the meaning of the expression, that you had fearlessly and unblushingly transgressed the letter of the law.

"It is now for the abused and offended law of the colony to assert its superiority, and to shew by your example, that it is not to be violated with impunity by the lawless will of individuals. And the court, in this particular case feel not so much difficulty in vindicating the law, as excusing the lenity and moderation with which they are about to carry it into effect, so that they may not seem to be adjudging a punishment inadequate or disproportioned to your offence. But they would rather fail here, than in dealing out a more ample measure of correction, since such will yet remain in their hands to be drawn forth when the occasion may unhappily call for it.

“The court have been induced to mitigate the punishment which they would otherwise have decreed, from a supposition that it might have been possible that you was not acquainted with the pregnancy of America at the time when you punished her. They hope for your own conscience sake, that this may actually have been the case. Some also of its members have considered the fact of your never having been heretofore called before the court, to answer to a charge like that which has been found against you, though you have been overseer or a manager of slaves for more than twenty years, a circumstance which ought to operate in your favour. And this consideration certainly has been allowed to prevail in the formation of the sentence which the court is about to award. They hope that it will still be marked enough, if you have any feeling or sentiment, to deter you from being guilty of a similar offence, and to prevent others from practising the like enormity.”

The sentence was three month's imprisonment, a fine of three hundred guilders, (about £25), with the costs and expences of the investigation, prosecution, and trial.

The reflections of the reader of this narrative will not be confined to the transaction itself. It will be impossible for him to avoid asking himself whether such a degree of perfection in cool barbarity could have been all at once arrived at, after the exercise of a merciful disposition for twenty years; whether it is not rather probable that the gradual advances of cruelty might have, more than once, brought a delinquent to the bar, if the country had been one where evidence is easily obtained. It is not in reference to the proceedings of the Court of Criminal Justice

of Berbice, nor the sentiments of its new President,* that this observation is made. All Englishmen revere the strict sense of justice which, in a public court, holds every man innocent each day of his life that he does not stand convicted, nor are they disposed to find fault with the lenity which seeks for grounds of extenuation even when crime is proved. But it is the vice of the old established system of the exclusion of slave-evidence in colonial law ;—it is the unhappy consequence of all the habits and feelings, connected with that system, that delinquency is seldom visited with retribution ; and that in too many cases of undoubted wrongs, “ justice,” to use the words of Sir William Young† “ *cannot* in truth be administered.” It is an undeniable fact, that, in all our colonies, trials of this kind are unpopular. How did the present atrocious crime come to light? By the poor victim making her way, by stealth, to the Missionary who had been her former teacher, to relate her doleful story, and shew her lacerated body to one whom she knew to be a friend. Even after the trial and sentence were over, the President, it is understood, found it necessary to use some interference to prevent the criminal from being replaced in the management of the very same plantation upon the expiration of his imprisonment.

The Writer cannot close this article without observing, that there are men in Berbice whom he cannot recollect without giving credit to the feelings which this detestable wickedness would oc-

* The Writer has heard of an able and excellent address having been delivered by Mr. Samuel, on opening the above newly organized Court, and cannot but deeply regret that owing to the recency of the appointment, he has never had the pleasure of knowing this gentleman, and truly English judge.

† See the Fourth of the preceding series of Letters.

casian them. But truth compels him also to apply here a sentiment expressed in one of the preceding Letters, that in his humble opinion, the general failing of good men in the West Indies, is, that they limit themselves too much to the regulation of their own conduct, and do not use sufficient means to overawe their cruel and tyrannical neighbours. He makes the observation with the less restraint, as he is willing to take his own share, as a West Indian, in the blame imputed by it. He knows by experience, how to sympathize with some colonists. The temptation, indeed, to omission of the duty in question is very powerful. A man must possess a rare union of strong qualities to be willing to make himself a sort of champion in a community, and take upon himself a combat with every ruffian in society. The Writer would strongly urge attention to the plan he recommends of some system of co-operation. This is the more necessary, as the customs of the country, at present, put too little in the power of good men. The word "property" applied equally to the land, the ox, and the slave, entitles every man to turn off his plantation any other man who enters it, if he is found to make an unwelcome use of his eyes and ears; and the same charge of impertinence lies against any stranger who shall presume to inquire into the cause of the cries of a negro under the lash, as is applicable in this country to the passenger who shall interfere respecting the discipline of a dog. A total alteration in consuetudinary laws, which protect and encourage the most atrocious crimes, would be an important reform for the Mother Country to press upon the Colonies.

ERRATUM.—P. 115, l. 18. After the word, accepted, insert "except in one or two instances."





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